1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Peloponnesos. Many villages[1] are snowbound for two, three, or even four months. The government has learned the necessity of helping these people stockpile their basic stores of food well in advance of the cold weather to avoid starvation or at least the malnutrition which would otherwise occur in these isolated villages.

Even around Athens, so very near the sea, the mountains take on an Alpine effect. On a January day in 1953, when early jonquils were blooming in the gardens around the villas, a thirty-minute drive took us to the top of Mount Parnes where people were skiing in two feet of snow, which lasted from three to four weeks.

In addition to the climatic role they play, the mountains become places of refuge when invaders overrun the country. Here the revolutionaries against the Turk began to flex their muscles prior to the beginning of the revolution in 1821. The dwellers of the cities and the monks in the monasteries may have kept Greek culture, in the sense of civilization, alive, but the villagers kept the spirit of independence alive. Over and over again those who really know Greece would say, "you have not seen our country until you leave the main highways and go up into the mountains to talk with the hardy peasants there." This tradition of the mountains is a conditioning influence in Greek thought and life along with the tradition of the sea.

What, one wonders, do the peasants think of the rough terrain about them? Do they personify any of the peaks or make their summits the dwelling place of gods, as did the Greeks of old? The old Greek pantheon, it seems, has been liquidated by the Christian God and the collection of saints revered by the Eastern Orthodox Church. "Thou hast conquered, Galilean," Swinburne's classic pagan wept. One does find on most peaks a monastery to St. Elijah, a whitewashed building reflecting the slanting sun in early morning or late afternoon. Students of these matters seem to agree that Elijah (Elias), who disappeared in a chariot of flame, may have superseded Helios and his fiery steeds.[14] The top of the mountain from ancient times has been the place to worship the sun.

Particular mountains, however, do have their own local traditions. One of the peaks of Panaitolikon in Central Greece is called the Mountain of the Old Woman, as the following legend explains.

> Once upon a time an old woman had finished pasturing her sheep below for the winter and had moved them up into the mountains for summer grazing. The month of March was almost ended, so the woman said: "March, you can go away; I don't need you any more for I have had a good winter below and will have a good summer here." But March in its anger borrowed one day from February, giving him thirty-one days. On that day there was a heavy storm. The old woman froze and turned into marble and there she now stands. That's why they call those heights the Mountain of the Old Woman.

[1] [Throughout the Pindus area and the higher parts of the Peloponnesos - ANALYST]

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

One often hears the expression, "he is alive, and he reigns," in Greece today, for it has become a household adage. When a person is asked how someone is getting along, he may reply, "he is alive, and he reigns."

On the little islands of Greece, on many wild promontories of the mainland, stand the small white churches dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the seafaring man. He replaced Poseidon, king of the sea, an important personage in the pagan pantheon, and most of these churches are built as the result of some vow made by the sailors faced with shipwreck who turned for help to the little icon of the saint in the stern or on the mast of the ship. These sailors curse the sea, speaking of it as "that old scoundrel," but they are tied to it with many bonds other than the economic. They tell the story of their patron saint, who found for himself the hold the sea has upon the Greek people. Nicholas suffered so many misfortunes from the sea that he decided to put it behind him forever. He picked up an oar and started walking. Every now and then he would stop someone and ask, "Do you know, stranger, what this is that I am carrying?" He moved higher and higher up into the mountains until he finally found a village where no one could identify what he was carrying and there at last he felt he could settle down, safe from the all-encircling sea.

Thus, it is not at all out of character for the seafarers, like their patron saint, to become thoroughly disgusted with the sea. They will imprecate her and, referring to her in the feminine gender, will imply that there is treachery afoot. They are also aware of her charm and, unlike the monk-like St. Nicholas, find they cannot live apart from her.

The Greek, whether seafarer or peasant, has come to grips with his stern physical environment, and this tough set of mind is just as important to his survival as the resources which he must utilize in his daily life. The tradition of the mountains led to the preservation of an independent villager, proud in his poverty, passionately devoted to his local area, and a worthy perpetuator of the folk legacy of ancient Greece. The tradition of the sea led the seafarer outwards and developed a type of Greek quite different from the mountaineer. The seafarer's commerce supplemented the self-subsistence of the peasant, but both joined together to create the political unit that is Greece today.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

solidated elementary schools, even if the educational administrators should consider them desirable.

Most villagers show a pride in their school and try to locate it on one of the best sites in the village, quite often near the main square. These buildings come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. In the middle of the Peloponnesos we found a village school over a hundred years old, which had been privately endowed. The building was a one-room, poorly lighted structure which must have been truly grand by standards of a century ago. But today it seemed sadly inadequate for the many children crowded into its rows of benches. In Metsovo, the picturesque Wallachian village between Ioannina (Epirus) and Trikkala, we found an attractive, two-story stone structure of a type characterizing the more prosperous established mountain settlement which furnished pack horses for the caravan routes before the coming of the railroad. In Malakassa, in Attica, we saw a school being built of concrete blocks in 1955 by a joint effort of the American Save the Children Federation and the local village authorities.

An American senator once became interested in the welfare of a village near Mount Olympus, since some of his constituents of Greek descent told him that little was being done to remedy the deplorable conditions there. An American Mission official went to investigate. Part of his report gives a vivid postwar word picture:

> The school was not completely ruined. The roof had collapsed, and the flooring, window-panes and furniture, all made of wood, had been used for firewood. The building remained and is being repaired. Unfortunately, the funds for school repairs are limited throughout Greece. The whole Nomos (Prefecture of Larissa, for instance, in which Kokkinopoulos is located), is comprised of 160 communities, most of the schools of which were damaged to some degree. The Nomos received $21,000 for this purpose, $2,371, of which went into the repair of the school at Kokkinopoulos. The roof has been replaced and the stairs finished, as have two of the four classrooms. In some villages, the State assistance was supplemented by the private initiative of the villagers, either in terms of materials or labor, and the schools were finished. In any case, the two classrooms are considered relatively adequate for the 138 children of school age in the village.[6]

The educational figures for 1956–57 throw some added light on the problem, since they show that there were in the whole country, including the cities, towns, and villages, a total of 8,527 elementary schools with about 940,000 pupils, or an average of 112 per school.[6] The chances are that in most village schools there are from 50 to 60 children per room, if the room happens to be large enough to accommodate that many, since approximately 60 percent of all elementary schools have one room and a single teacher.[7]

1:Sanders Z-5,8 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

871 Therefore, the school board in many villages has its hands full trying to provide an adequate school building by seeking aid from the King's Institute, from the local community council, or from whatever other source can be tapped. The village is much more apt to procure and hold a teacher, since teachers are in such short supply, if it can provide him something approximating satisfactory living conditions. That is why some school boards, in constructing a new school, include a room in which the teacher can live, for such private accommodations are not available in many Greek villages. Providing necessary equipment and school supplies is another persistent problem for the school board, particularly since many of the parents cannot afford to buy for their children what the teacher thinks essential. Nor should it be supposed that the national government is indifferent to this state of affairs. Its funds for education are necessarily limited and these are first earmarked for teachers' salaries. What kind of person, one might ask, would care to teach under some of the difficulties encountered in the village schools?

[875] [346] [658]

The Village Teacher

875 For the almost 940,000 pupils in elementary school in 1956–57, there 872 were 19,872 teachers. This means a national average of about 47 pupils per teacher, although as an average it indicates that a large number of teachers have more than this. In many of the smaller villages, the teachers have from four to six grades in one room, reminiscent of the rural one-room school in America of many years ago.

If we turn to accounts of village life, we gain a quick insight into, but certainly not a representative sampling of, the number of teachers one would meet, since each of these villages has at least three teachers:

[874] In a fairly large Macedonian village we find five teachers, three with the rank of "instructors" who have finished a two-year normal school beyond secondary school. The two others are trained kindergarten or nursery-school teachers. They have 402 pupils, of whom 358 are in the regular six grades and 44 are in kindergarten and nursery. Most of these teachers have been in this village for at least five years. Nevertheless, because of their urban background, their thinking is urban and they find it difficult to take part in village activities.

In a village near Xanthe there are three teachers, all new to the community, who are paid by the central government. Two of these are from the Peloponnesos far to the south. All are graduates of the pedagogical academies. They have 156 pupils with an average daily attendance of 142.

Another village in Central Greece has three teachers: one man and two women. The man has resided in the village since 1947; one woman was appointed head of the school in 1942 but was away during the German occupation; the third was appointed in 1951. All are graduates of the normal school.

1:Sanders Z-5/4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Although a rare Puritan strain appears now and then, Greek religion is also supposed to be fun, as any attendance at a religious festival will show. In fact, most religious occasions provide an excuse for merriment, even during the ceremonies. To the uninitiated such behavior borders on the irreverent, but the Greek might well argue that joy and even levity should prove as pleasing to God as assumed sorrow or feigned piety. Indeed, festivals are as old as Greek religion itself, with each carrying its own sacramental message to be expressed in dance as well as in formal liturgy. But religious expression is not confined to formal occasions; it permeates the daily life of the people, as we shall see.

Orthodoxy and Greekness

To start any discussion of religion and the Greek peasant, it is necessary to state clearly and unequivocally that adherence to the official religion of Greece, the Greek Orthodox Church, is tantamount to being Greek. Only 2 to 3 percent of the population of the country are not members of the Orthodox Church. Though those comprising this small fraction may have political citizenship, may speak the Greek tongue, and may take pride in the legacy of ancient Greece, they are at best suspect Greeks if they do not nominally at least belong to the Orthodox Church.

But what is the syncretism that is called Orthodoxy? This question can be answered on at least two levels: first, that of the peasant and, second, that of the educated Greek. To the peasant, the coming of Christianity did not mean an important break with many of his previous practices, beliefs, and even deities. What were formerly deities became saints, with some of the more powerful deities becoming identified with the most powerful saints, such as the Holy Virgin. It seemed perfectly fitting and not at all surprising to find an old, old church dedicated to St. Theodore in the southern Peloponnesos, two of whose columns were from an ancient pre-Christian temple standing on their original pediments. Many scholars have described in considerable detail various aspects of this easy transition from pagan to Christian worship.[1] William Miller, a keen student of Greek life, has pointed out that the saints play a very important part in Greek life: their functions and names often prove that they are the legitimate descendants of the old Greek gods, the new religion having been grafted on to the old. He indicates that Helios, the sun god, has been succeeded by the Prophet Elias (Elijah), whose chapels crown almost every eminence in Greece; the Virgin has replaced Athena Parthenos, and the Parthenon in the Middle Ages was the Church of St. Mary, whether as a Greek Cathedral or as a Latin minster; St. Dionysios has dethroned Dionysis; St. George and the Dragon are the Christian version of Theseus and the Minotaur, so that the Theseum naturally became in Christian times the Church of St. George.[2]

Marcu Beza, who describes many pagan survivals with Christian names

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

in a handkerchief, thereby putting the priest under his control so he will do no harm. But, bad luck or not, the priest is indispensable. At numerous repasts celebrating a christening, a nameday, or some other important event, we had to wait what seemed an interminable length of time because the priest could not arrive any earlier. Without him, nothing could get under way. One serious student of Greek rural life said: "In Greece when a priest is missing, it is a great calamity, for the Greek is not used to praying by himself without a priest." [11] In earlier days when the belief in vampires was much more widespread than today, it was the priest, the minister of God, who alone had any power over them. He could calm the fears of the people.

The responsibility for the local parish does not fall entirely upon the priest, although the chief responsibility is his. There is a church board, consisting of three to five members, with the priest as president. The nominations for this board are submitted to the bishop by the priest, and the bishop designates them as official members of the board. One member of the board is the treasurer. When these local officials are asked just what their duties are, they usually include in their replies: to help the priest, to look after the finances, and to care for the church building. This board has as one of its chief duties the sale of the candles in the church vestibule and can use the proceeds of the sale for local church needs. In most communities it is considered a great honor to serve as a member of this board, although this position requires much work and frequently has more responsibility than the presidency of the local cooperative.

A recent development is the growth of the Sunday school, held after the regular morning service. Young boys, girls, and a few women are usually found in attendance, although young people up to the age of twenty are urged to attend. Throughout much of Greece the priest gives the instruction, although in Northern Greece we found many villages where the teacher had taken over this extra duty. Usually the same lesson is given to all age groups at the same time. It is customary in some places, such as the Attic villages we visited, for the school to be held on a weekday by the teacher, in which case it was not called Sunday school but "the preaching school."

The heart, however, of the Greek Orthodox Church — as of many other Christian bodies — is the Sunday-morning Mass. Anyone attending cannot help but notice the building itself, usually in the shape of a Greek cross, with the ends terminating in apses. Over the center there is a dome representing heaven. In front, the altar screen (*eikonostasion*), on which one finds the icons or pictures of various saints, separates the altar (*vema*), which no woman can enter, from the nave, where the worshippers congregate.[12] The priest moves back and forth between altar and nave in what seems a random manner to the uninitiated. As he turns to face the altar,

1:Sanders Z-594 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

The Bishop of Messenia and His Good Works

793 794 [246] The contrast between an ordinary priest's home and the bishop's palace in Kalamata is quite marked, for the latter was once the ornate building housing the local branch of the Bank of Greece. But the bishop's interest in the people of his diocese, both the city dwellers in Kalamata and the farmers in the surrounding villages, equaled that of any priest for his parishioners. The bishop, when visited in 1953, proved a friendly, jovial person, with an iron-gray beard, a dignified though rotund figure, and a very forward-looking social philosophy. It was this latter quality in particular that had made me seek him out after hearing from friends in Athens of his unusual achievements in the welfare field.

He began to talk about what he had done and hoped to do for his people: "I became interested when I saw their great needs, for, as a church leader, I am responsible for the welfare of whatever people are under me." But before he started on any specific projects after his arrival in this diocese, he had thought it best, as he phrased it, "to put myself at the disposal of the people." He gradually gained the confidence of the members of his diocese by making available to them for local use all of the church's funds derived from festivals. The people began to realize that this bishop was interested in them. Later on, when he began asking them to support the various projects which he started, they gladly cooperated.

793 747 His first project was a day nursery, which takes care of one hundred and twenty children whose mothers are at work, started in 1947. Visiting this nursery in the afternoon when all of the children had gone home, we noted the cleanliness and the simple but adequate facilities. The success of this nursery prompted the bishop to start another one in Mycenae for one hundred children in 1948.

736 793 848 [597] [847] One perplexing problem was that of illegitimate children. In many cases the mother would kill such a child or leave it with people who exploited it unmercifully. So he started a home for these children in 1947. Since then, two hundred and fifty children have gone through the home, sixty of them have been adopted and fifty were there then. The equipment was simple and bare, but everything was spotless. When we entered, the children came up to the bishop with great pleasure, for he is a favorite with the young children. One of the nurses told us: "When we have a child that is lonesome, who won't eat, we ask the bishop to come feed the child. When he comes, the child always eats."

793 736 [597] [657] The bishop noticed, however, that many of the boy foundlings, but relatively few of the girl foundlings, would be adopted. The boys who were not taken by foster parents by their fifth or sixth year would go into the National Boys' Orphanage of Kalamata, largely supported by the state, which had one hundred and fifty boys in 1953. Something had to be done for the girls.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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15. The schoolmaster and his pupils by their century-old school, Kyparissia, Peloponnesos. Originally the school was privately endowed.

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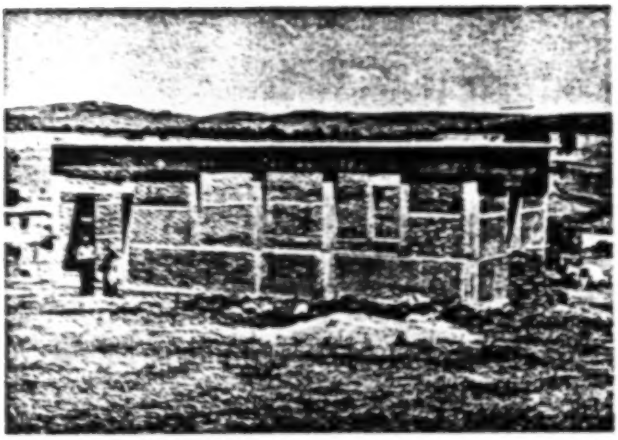

[177] 18. A school building under construction in Malakasa village, new promise for two dozen children. The Save the Children Federation provides the materials; Malakasa, the labor.

[p. 272-J]

1:Sanders Z-5.4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

346 361 764 [783] [312]

Generally, in the old villages the church is in the outskirts. To the back of the church is the cemetery, which is walled to keep out both wild predatory animals and farm animals. For Greeks it is a sin to step on a grave. The church may have a belltower, or the bell may be hung from the branch of an old tree. There is always a well in the churchyard and the cemetery of the old village. It is used as drinking water and for the purification after a burial. The main church of the old village must be the tallest, the largest, and the best-constructed building of the village. This signifies respect for God; the past is not forgotten. This is very much after the pattern of the ancient Greeks who built their shrines as the best buildings while they themselves lived in huts. . . .

Both the church and the cemetery of the old village must be located in a landscape of natural beauty and scenery. Thus faith, worship, and death are in close relation with the natural scenery.[23]

[178] [769]

But Valassis adds a discordant note. The new churches are now being constructed in the center of the village, while the cemeteries remain on the outskirts. No longer, therefore, do the peasants, after a Mass or ceremony, go to the graveyard to pay respect to their ancestors.

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

onto the Atalanti road at the BP station will stop here if there are any passengers.

The asphalt and dirt roads are not the only routes by which the village can be approached. The local railroad station of Helikon is just a mile up the highway going toward Kifisokhori. Trains from Athens stop at Helikon at least once a day. The train can also be used to reach Kifisokhori. Thus, a resident of Vasilika can reach any of the main towns of eastern Greece with relative ease and at no great expense, even from the standpoint of his own standard of living.

The same transportation routes which enable the villagers to leave their homes also enable people and products to enter the village. Itinerant vendors of fresh fish, oranges, tomatoes, ice cream, cloth, crockery, sacred pictures, and the like reach Vasilika over these roads. Tinsmiths, blacksmiths, and cobblers use them to come to set up shop for a day or two near one of the coffee houses. The same roads bring gypsies who occasionally pass through the village to beg and to entertain. On the many occasions when family gatherings are in order, the town relatives of the villagers can reach Vasilika with ease.

This description has so far primarily concerned itself with Vasilika's accessibility to town or city centers of commerce, government, and recreation. But there are also paths through the fields and into and over the surrounding hills that lead to the neighboring villages. One can still walk or ride a horse or a donkey to reach these settlements. For the women of Vasilika, these are the important routes. By following them, they can reach the homes of their parents and their daughters, attend the engagements, weddings, and saint's day celebrations in their home villages, and perhaps help out when a daughter has a child. These same paths bring the relatives of Vasilika's women into the village on similar occasions. From the standpoint of the rural economy, this network of paths permits the movement of farm laborers among the villages. Indeed, it is in this way that the postman walks from village to village carrying the mail.

The stress on the many avenues of contact with other people and communities available to Vasilika's population should not lead one to imagine a bustling, busy center with a constant ebb and flow of traffic. The exact nature of movement in and around the village can be better understood if the spatial arrangement of Vasilika's buildings is known. Social relations among the villagers are also affected by these arrangements.

Inside Vasilika

The ridge, on the lowest slopes of which most of the structures are built, lies, as I have said, a half mile from the main highway and somewhat parallel to it. The highway runs from northwest to southeast, Vasilika's ridge from northwest to east. To reach the first village structure, one walks north about three-tenths of a mile on a dirt road leading from the highway. Vineyards and fields are on the right; to the left stands the new one-room schoolhouse built in 1959, with its play yard and surrounding wire fence. A stand of young pines and another of young cypresses, newly planted by the school children, adjoined the schoolhouse in 1961. On the road, past the schoolhouse, a little further to the

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

west but on the same side of the road is Vasilika's cemetery. It is a small square area outlined by tall cypresses standing just inside the low stone wall which encloses the graves and the small church of St. Nicholas. Mass is said in this church in celebration of the birthday of its patron saint on December 6th. Sunday afternoon Easter services and funeral ceremonies are also held there.

Past the cemetery the road turns east, runs through the village, and constitutes its main street. Almost all the buildings of Vasilika are ranged for about one-fifth of a mile on both sides of this dirt road. Most of the houses are on the ridge side of the road; a single row of structures lines the field side. As one continues east on the village street and looks to the right on the field side of the road, he first sees fields and then the old school building. The next structure is the main church of the village, the church of St. Athanasius. It is the largest building in the settlement, and, like most of the others, it is constructed of field stone. Regular Sunday masses, Christmas and Easter services, baptisms, weddings, as well as the majority of saint's day and other special liturgies are conducted here by the village priest. The bell in the campanile of St. Athanasius summons the villagers to church, the children to school, and the men to an impromptu public meeting on the rare occasions when one is called to discuss village affairs. And, inevitably, the tolling of the bell announces the death of one of the villagers.

Separated from St. Athanasius by a very narrow alley stands a one-room structure which serves as the office for the village government. It now has a telephone, the only one in the village. Near the village headquarters and still on the field side of the road lives the owner of a combined store and coffeehouse. A ground-floor room of his house contains merchandise such as matches, cigarettes, lemons, salt, sugar, canned vegetables and fish, aspirin and penicillin, thread, and miscellaneous small items, while the outside space in front of the store is reserved for chairs and tables. From this coffeehouse, on the field side of the village, the rest of the structures are homes and their outbuildings, roughly in a line near the road.

Starting now at the western end of the village, and looking east at the ridge side of the road, one sees houses and their outbuildings occupying the lower third of the ridge. The uppermost group of homes were, in 1955, reed huts in which some of the shepherd families lived. Other reed huts served as storage houses. By 1961, the dwelling-huts had all been replaced by new brick houses, already wired for electricity but otherwise in various stages of completion. On the ridge side of the road the only buildings which are not exclusively used as residences are, first, another combined store and coffeehouse, which stands on the street diagonally opposite the first and is also a room in the house of its owner, and second, a nearly completed stone reservoir.

Finally, some two hundred feet past the last house and slightly up the slope, stands the small church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, the patron saints of the village. Here the village celebrates its *paniyiri*, its patron saints' day festival, on the first of July. Mass is celebrated in the morning, and villagers from the surrounding countryside fill the small edifice to overflowing. Occasionally, other masses are said at this church in the course of the year. Except for the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

Orthodox Church has been able to preserve in all its integrity the faith once delivered to the saints. Ecclesiastical organisation has never in eastern Christendom been looked upon as having an importance such as, at any rate from the eleventh century onwards, it assumed in the west. Provided only that he is free to participate fully in the liturgical life of his local church, the Greek or Russian Christian is prepared to sit curiously lightly to matters of jurisdiction and the machinery of ecclesiastical government and administration. Even when, as in the U.S.S.R. to-day, the Church is subject to every imaginable restriction save this bare permission to celebrate the divine mysteries, she can yet contrive to hold fast to her traditions with a tenacity which must often strike the western Christian as little short of miraculous: "the stable perseverance in these our days of the *Greek* Church", wrote Rycaut in the seventeenth century, "notwithstanding the Oppression and Contempt put upon it by the *Turk* . . . is a Confirmation no less convincing than the Miracles and Power which attended its first beginnings."

So, throughout the long centuries of Turkish domination, the Greek Church held fast the traditions which enshrined the saving truths of the divine economy. The Gospel was preached less by means of homilies and sermons than through the regular cycle of feast and fast; though Christian schools were maintained, often with great heroism in the face of overwhelming difficulties, the children of Hellas relied even more upon the visible catechism of the Church's liturgy. So it was that the faith was preserved as a royal treasure: the life of the mystical body burned on in secret, though the royal priesthood might be "expelled their Churches and those converted into Moschs; the Mysteries of the Altar conceal'd in secret and dark places . . ."

It is in remote townships like Kastoria that one can best enter into the spirit of the Greek Church under the Turkish yoke. To the traveller who approaches the ancient city of Diocletian from the southward there is little to suggest the presence of some seventy-two churches. Kastoria reveals its secrets only to those who are prepared to spend several days scrambling up and down the stony paths below the nineteenth-century metropolis, where tiny churches are set obscurely amidst the high, fortress-like domestic architecture of a later age. A great number of these churches date from Byzantine days, for from about the seventh century onwards this mountain township served as a place of exile for many whose presence at Constantinople was, for one reason or another, considered undesirable. Many more were built during the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

178 795 centuries of Turkish dominion. Outwardly they are scarcely distinguishable from the cottages which surround them: only the shallow ● 346 apse at the east end proclaims the church.

[532] Within, however, one finds oneself in another world. Walls unpierced by windows are covered with paintings which set forth the whole story of creation and redemption. Patriarchs and prophets mingle with the saints of the new dispensation; Elias is caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire and Jonah goes down to the bottoms of the mountains with the weeds wrapped about his head; those whose names are honoured throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, Athanasius, Basil and Gregory the Divine, rub shoulders with local saints like St. George of Iannina and the Neo-Martyrs; the Lord Christ is baptised in Jordan, He changes the water into wine and reigns in triumph from the tree of Calvary; the Holy Spirit descends in tongues of fire upon the apostles. Here in these little chapels—"rather like Vaults or Sepulchres than Churches, having their Roofs almost levelled with the Superficies of the Earth, lest the most ordinary exsurgency of structure should be accused for triumph of Religion, and to stand in competition with the lofty Spires of the *Mahometan* Moschs"—the mysterious life of the local church was nourished throughout the dark days of oppression; the saints which were in Kastoriá, like their brethren at Thessalonica, obeyed the apostolic injunction to hold fast the traditions which they had been taught.

178 795 788 771 Not infrequently, it must be confessed, zeal for the preservation of the faith in the midst of an alien environment gave rise to a certain lack of discrimination. The pure gold of the apostolic tradition has not been handed down from generation to generation without gathering to itself certain accretions of doubtful worth, and the simple Christian is not always able to distinguish the one from the other or prepared even to admit the possibility of such intermingling.

> This Reverence to the Church [observes one of the old writers] produces a firm belief and strict adherence to the Articles of it, and to all the Ceremonies and matters the most minute and indifferent, not suffering the least change or alteration in them. For although they are sensible (as many of their Priests have confessed to me) of the inconvenient length of their Liturgies . . . and of many superstitious Customs and Ceremonies derived to them from the times of *Gentilism*, which are now ingrafted into, and as it were grown up

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

of valour, worthy of comparison with the greatest exploits of the heroes of antiquity, during that bitter winter when the Italian army was pushed steadily back towards the sea across the snowy heights of Albania. The war against the Communists partook of the nature of a conscious defence of a Christian civilisation against the "Accursed of God". Not least in the new movements, piety and patriotism are inseparably linked—even though I have never seen in a house of the Zoë Brotherhood paintings of the *Awroff* with her attendant ironclads steaming to the relief of the holy mountain, such as commonly adorn the guest-rooms of Greek monasteries.

This identity of Church and State has, it need hardly be said, certain weaknesses; the Church has not, for example, always enjoyed that measure of freedom in the election of her hierarchs that most people would consider desirable (there have been several deplorable examples of the intrusion of political considerations into episcopal appointments within the last generation). The decisions of the Holy Synod have to be ratified by the State, and a lay procurator sits with the bishops on the *hierarchia*. These, however, are but trifling disadvantages as compared with the opportunities afforded by the profound associations that bind the Church to every department of Greek life, and which give to the nation-wide revival of the last few years such boundless potentialities for good.

Though the Greek Church has held fast the traditions committed to her charge, the guardians of these traditions have been as men only dimly aware of the nature of the treasure entrusted to their keeping: conscious only of its infinite worth and of the duty of passing it on intact and undiminished to those who followed in their steps. Now, it seems, the guardians are beginning to realise something of the true character of the royal treasure that they have watched over so faithfully these many centuries. The younger Greek theologians, like their brethren of the diaspora, are rediscovering their proper tradition and are filled with wonder at its richness and splendour. The possibilities latent in this reawakening are infinite. As yet (so far as Greece is concerned), it has scarcely begun. There can, however, be little question that the growing self-awareness found to-day amongst Orthodox theologians, the first fruits of which have already been gathered in Paris, is of incalculable importance not for the Orthodox world alone, but for Christendom as a whole.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

are chosen. Before presenting himself to a bishop the candidate for ordination must decide finally and irrevocably to what state of life he is called, since marriage is not permitted after ordination. This rule, as will appear when we come to consider the training of the Greek clergy, gives rise to many grave practical problems.

Such then, very briefly, is the framework of the diocesan and parochial organisation. The married clergy, "in parishes, residing on their cures", form a distinct class with well-defined duties and limitations peculiar to their condition; while the general administration of the diocese, the ministries of preaching and confessing, together with the organisation of the catechetical schools and Christian Unions which have become so important an element in the pattern of Greek church life within the last few years, are the immediate responsibility of the metropolitan assisted by his headquarters staff of monks and lay theologians.

The Greek bishop is still in a very real sense the *persona* of his diocese: the natural leader of the whole community in matters temporal as well as spiritual. Not for nothing is he commonly referred to as ὁ Δεσπότης, 'the Despot'. During the Turkish occupation the power of the bishop within his own diocese was all but unbounded, and as he had formerly mediated between his people and the Turkish authorities so, more recently, it was he who commonly bore the heaviest burden of responsibility during the occupation of Greece by the Axis troops. Archbishop Damaskinos was called to play, on a wider stage and before a larger audience, it is true, a part which was being sustained no less faithfully, albeit more obscurely, by many of his brethren in the provincial towns of Greece during the years from 1941 to 1945. Though times have changed since the day when the people of Salonica overthrew the minarets of the fleeing oppressor with such patriotic and religious ardour that many casualties were caused by the falling masonry, the Greek bishop still maintains a style befitting his position. The metropolis (where it has survived the destruction of the war years) is generally amongst the most impressive and substantial structures of a provincial town, and though the bishop is readily accessible to all and sundry, he nevertheless bears himself with considerable dignity. When he walks abroad, carrying a silver-headed staff and accompanied by a deacon, the people draw aside to let him pass, bowing their heads and putting off their caps. The faithful who come to the metropolis—whether they be peasants from some nearby hamlet or senior army officers from the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

interior of the vehicle, there were others who had with less formality installed themselves amidst the multitudinous array of baggage, live-stock and firearms which renders every Greek bus incapable of passing beneath what used, in England at least, to be described as 'a low bridge'. To the north of Drama the road crosses a dusty plain for several kilometres and then turns sharply to the right between two high peaks and winds laboriously up a rocky defile. Every few hundred yards there was a bridge: either guarded by a block-house, manned by men of the mobile section of the home-guard, or else lying in ruins and necessitating a perilous descent into a dried-up water course. These occasional outposts apart, we saw no human habitation for the best part of another twenty kilometres, when we reached the head of the pass. Here we halted for a few minutes and refreshed ourselves with cold mountain water from a stream by the roadside. Shortly after three o'clock we began the descent into the well-watered plateau, within sight of the Bulgarian frontier, on the northern fringe of which lies the village of Kato Nevrokopi, and which had been the scene of bitter fighting when the Germans poured into Greece in April, 1941. A few minutes later we were among the houses of Nevrokopi and my fellow-passengers pointed out to me the cottage, in no way distinguishable from its neighbours save by the board bearing the Byzantine eagles and the inscription *ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΥΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΥ* beside the door, which, *faute de mieux*, has served as the bishop's headquarters since 1945: the old metropolis having been destroyed during the Bulgarian occupation of eastern Macedonia.

Half-past three on a warm August afternoon not being a discreet hour at which to call on a Greek bishop, I retired to the green shade of a vine beside the *plateia* to sip coffee and discuss such varied topics as the Bishop of Birmingham, Schiller and the Scottish liturgy (and, inevitably, the incredible folly of the British electorate in banishing Mr. Churchill to the opposition benches), with the commanding officer of the gendarmerie and other local celebrities. Meanwhile, a troop of small boys was despatched at regular intervals to reconnoitre in the vicinity of the metropolis. At half-past four it was reported that the windows were open (all true Greeks sleep with windows and shutters firmly closed), and I was thereupon escorted to the metropolis where I was warmly welcomed by the Bishop. We talked until a little after six o'clock, when the *ephemerios*, or curate, of the parish arrived to lead the way to church for evensong.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

A VILLAGE FESTIVAL

When the Metropolitan was suitably attired he took his silver-headed stick and we set out in a little procession towards the cathedral church of St. Demetrius, which towers above the wretched cottages that surround it like some great vessel among her attendant tugs. The Metropolitan and myself were preceded by the parish priest, while well ahead there danced a certain Anargyri, whose daily joy and responsibility it is to remove straying cattle and goats from the Bishop's path, to wave to their feet the loungers on doorsteps, the coffee drinkers and those who play *trictrac* in their leafy retreats; finally, to silence the village's solitary gramophone and other profane noises. As our little procession hove in sight, the bell-ringer, stationed among his charges at the summit of the campanile, shattered the slumbers of all who had immoderately prolonged their siesta, and we made our way up the steps into the narthex of a surprisingly lofty church.

After evensong we returned, somewhat less formally, to the Bishop's cottage for supper—a simple meal of potatoes and fruit (by reason of the fast) which was shared by his two nephews, both of them orphans. I slept that night at an inn adjoining the cottage-metropolis.

The following morning, it being Sunday, we were in church from a quarter to seven until a little after ten. The liturgy ended, the colonel in charge of the local garrison drove us out in his jeep to the village of Granitsi, high on the wooded hills above the plateau, where we sat under a great oak while the villagers came to greet their father in God and brought little gifts of fruit and honey.

At evensong in the cathedral that evening, while the cantors sang of:

> Things creeping innumerable,
> Both small and great beasts,

a dormouse appeared from behind the cupboard where the liturgical books were stored, and sat most devoutly before the beautiful doors for a considerable space. The Bishop told me afterwards that it was the first mouse—the colloquial *pontikos*, with a twinkle at my use of the classical word—he had seen in the church during the four years that had elapsed since his consecration as Metropolitan of the smallest and poorest see of Greece.

The old diocese of Nevrokopi had included 120 communities. After the first Balkan war, however, it had been partitioned, and ninety of its villages as well as the town of Neyrokopi now lie within Bulgarian

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

795 648 [162] 722 166 territory. Kato Nevrokopi, where the Greek Metropolitan has his throne, is a large village, or *komopolis* (it had a pre-war population of about 2,000 souls), about twelve kilometres from the frontier.[1] The whole of this region was evacuated by the civilian population in March, 1941, when invasion seemed imminent, most of the refugees taking shelter in Drama, some forty-five kilometres to the southward. When the Germans abandoned eastern Macedonia to the Bulgars, all who were able to do so fled to Salonica, Verroia and other towns beyond the river Strymon. It was only after the withdrawal of the Bulgars in the autumn of 1944 that the Greek population began to trickle back. 727 [736] [346] In 1949 no less than twelve of the thirty villages of the diocese were in ruins and uninhabited, and the number of the orphans was said to approach 900. Kato Nevrokopi itself, though it still bore traces of the great battle which had raged about the forts of the Metaxas line and their heroic defenders, had come through the years of occupation and the more recent troubles almost unscathed, save for the deliberate destruction of the metropolis and the school.

796 [793] It had been arranged that the Metropolitan should celebrate the liturgy next morning at the village of Dasoto, four or five miles away, which would be keeping its patronal festival. The day was ushered in by bugle-calls and a great beating of drums, revealing shortly after five o'clock that the newly-formed scout troop was already abroad. These [333] martial noises were soon mingled with the soft ringing of a multitude [512] of bells, as the cattle were driven out through the narrow paths between the cottages to the dusty river bed where they assemble each morning [403] before moving off to the pastures. By a little before seven it had become evident that others besides ourselves were keeping the feast at Dasoto, as a few carts drawn by oxen or buffaloes, together with some solitary riders, rattled across the bridge and headed westwards. We followed [457] in a jeep. Our path lay through fields of maize and tall sunflowers, above which occasional glimpses of a blue and white flag of vast dimensions indicated the scouts' line of march, along tracks which a heavy shower would render impassable to anything on wheels. Dasoto [361] came into view after a quarter of an hour; a cluster of lime-washed [342] cottages, the church prominent amongst them, on the lower slopes of [793] the heavily wooded heights that surround the plateau.

The parish priest and some thirty or forty men and boys had come as far as the outskirts of the village to welcome us. The Bishop's vestments,

[1] [i.e. Bulgarian frontier - ANALYST]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

celebration of the divine mysteries. The liturgy was no longer thought of as a corporate action in which the whole congregation—the laity no less than the clerks—had an essential part to play. Slowly but surely the mass came to be regarded rather in the light of a marvellous rite, fraught indeed with inexpressible wonder and mystery, performed by the sacred ministers: as something *said* rather than *done*. The common people, capable no longer of entering into the full meaning of the prayer of the Church, came to church to hear the mass and to occupy themselves with 'private' devotions bearing little relation to the action which was taking place within the sanctuary, where the sacred ministers performed their liturgy on behalf of the whole body. The ceremonies which from about the thirteenth century onwards gathered about the elevation of the holy gifts belong to an age which had already acquiesced in the growth of a popular piety no longer effectively subject to the control of the prayer of the Church.

The English Prayer Book attempted to restore to the laity their rightful liturgy. The mass was again sung that the people might hear it and in a language which they could understand. But the reformers themselves were too much subject to mediaeval assumptions: the real roots of the trouble still lay hid. An emphasis on audibility was not enough and congregational worship was not necessarily *corporate* worship. For the common people the new vernacular mass was still something said rather than done; metrical psalms and the congregational hymns which gradually superseded them, had no more organic connexion with the eucharistic action than the older vernacular devotions wherewith our forefathers had occupied themselves while the priest, aloof and apart, performed his mysterious acts at God's board.

The expression 'to hear mass' has no parallel in Greek. The Greek Christian goes to his parish church not so much to *hear* a service as to play his part in a corporate action in which all the different orders of the Church are actively involved. The very arrangement of the church emphasises this fact; the sacred ministers are not, as is now usual in the west, separated from the people by a long quire or chancel. The holy table stands not against the east wall of the apse but clear in the midst of the *altar*, or sanctuary as we should say. The average Greek church, it should also be borne in mind, is by western standards very tiny—even the great basilicas of Salonica are dwarfed by the cathedrals of the gothic north—and since the space which separates the holy table from

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

788 the eikonostasis is commonly no greater than suffices to permit of the
796 prostrations of the celebrant, and, in a parish church, the laity occupy
346 the greater part of the space beneath the dome, and press against the great screen which bears the eikons, many of the congregation are thus within two or three yards of the holy table itself.

But what, the reader may ask, of the eikonostasis? Does not this solid screen, pierced only by three doors, extending right across the whole width of the church, cut off the laity from all effective participation in the action taking place within the sanctuary quite as much as mere physical remoteness? Does it not tend, as has been asserted by Dom Gregory Dix, to force "upon the eastern liturgies the character of two simultaneous services, the one proceeding outside the screen for the people, conducted chiefly by the deacon; the other—the real liturgical action—proceeding inside the screen conducted by the celebrant"?

788 That there is an element of truth in such contentions may be ad-
796 mitted: witness a tendency which is steadily gaining ground in Greece
346 to-day. In many town churches (with the exception of a few provincial
178 cathedrals liturgical reform has as yet made little headway in the country districts), the curtain which could be drawn across the space above the double doors in the centre of the eikonostasis has now fallen into disuse—at any rate so far as the eucharistic liturgy is concerned. The doors themselves are as a rule only about three feet in height, and it has long been customary to draw these curtains (thus screening the sanctuary completely from the view of the people) at two points during the divine liturgy, at both of which there is much coming and going about the holy table; at the placing of the holy gifts upon the altar immediately after the Great Entrance; and again during the communion of the ministers. This custom has now been abandoned in many places. In a few churches the doors themselves have been removed as, for instance, at Aghia Katerini, Piraeus (where the liturgy is celebrated with a reverence and propriety unsurpassed in all Greece), and, I am told, in the chapel of the Oecumenical Patriarchate at Constantinople.

788 When all is said, however, the effects of the eikonostasis have been
796 grossly exaggerated by western writers, too many of whom have been
346 content to reiterate *ad nauseam* the strictures of their predecessors in the field of controversy: strictures grounded not infrequently upon the most superficial acquaintance with the liturgical practice of eastern Christendom. The divisive properties of the eikonostasis are most marked in a large church when the space before the royal doors normally

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

occupied by the laity is railed off and reserved for the singers and distinguished visitors. Such an arrangement, so far as Greece is concerned, will be found only in certain churches of Athens and Salonica. It would, I fancy, be generally acknowledged by all who have worshipped among Greek Christians as well as in the churches of the Latins that as an instrument for creating a sense of separation between ministers and people the eikonostasis of the Easterlings is vastly inferior to the Frankish quire or chancel. An Orthodox priest who has celebrated the liturgy in more than 200 western churches (most of them Anglican) has remarked that he finds himself far more cut off from his congregation in an English parish church—without an eikonostasis of course, but with a long chancel, often having a screen at its *western* end—than in an Orthodox church where the screen is never further away than four feet from the altar.

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It needs also to be borne in mind how great a part of the eucharistic action is enacted *outside* the eikonostasis in the midst of the congregation. Thus the deacon, whose normal place is immediately beneath the eikon of the Pantocrator in the dome, acts as a constant link between all the various orders of the church. The bishop's throne, which forms part of the ordinary furnishing of every Greek church—a constant reminder that the parish priest 'liturgises' only as the deputy of the diocesan—also stands outside the screen, on the south side of the space beneath the dome, so that the bishop is often completely surrounded by his flock. At the solemn entries which occur during the course of the divine liturgy —the lesser, with the book of the Gospels, the greater, with the holy gifts veiled and borne aloft—the sacred ministers descend into the body of the church and make a slow circuit of the whole building. Outside the eucharistic liturgy itself, some of the most memorable events of the liturgical year—the great blessing of the waters at Epiphany (the Feast of Lights, as it is popularly known), the solemn kneeling at the second vespers of Whit-Sunday and the adoration of the holy cross on September 14th, as well as many of the profoundly moving ceremonies of Holy Week and Eastertide—are celebrated not within the sanctuary but in the midst of the congregation.

This would naturally be impossible if the Greek church were encumbered with chairs or pews. In fact, the only seating consists of a few stalls, with crutch-like supports for the arms, against the walls of the church. Standing—not kneeling—is, as it has always been, the normal attitude for prayer. At one of the great festivals the people will stand for hours wedged so tightly together that it is impossible even to cross

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

oneself. All other considerations apart, such a setting is hardly favourable to the growth of certain individualistic types of piety which flourish amongst the Franks, who worship their Creator in strange and novel ways, each isolated from his fellow and entrenched within the citadel of his own pew.

In Greece there is but one celebration of the liturgy on a Sunday or holy day in any one church. This is a rule which is waived only in cases of extreme necessity and then only when a *parekklesion*, or side-chapel, is available so that it is not necessary to use the same altar twice (most Greek churches have only one altar). A priest may celebrate only once on any given day.

In Greece the times of services are never announced and questions on this score are invariably met with evasive if not actually misleading replies. Services commence earlier in summer than in winter. An hour or two after sunrise the bells will be rung and the priest and a couple of readers will begin to sing the morning offices—*mesonyktikon* (which should, as the name indicates, be read at midnight, as it is in the monastic use), and *ortbros*, or lauds, the office of the dawn. Towards the end of the latter service—perhaps an hour or more after the village's first awakening—the bells will be rung a second time. Still the church is comparatively empty. The holy eucharist follows *ortbros* without a break about nine o'clock, and by the time that the thrice-holy hymn is sung (when the bells summon the faithful for the third and last time) the congregation will have begun to swell, until, at the great entry with the holy gifts, the greater part of the village will be packed within the walls of the church, the men to the right, the women to the left, the air by this time heavy with incense.

The whole service is invariably sung. What the west knows as a low mass, the 'early service' or 'eight o'clock', dear to so many English churchmen, is unknown to the Greeks. The traditional Byzantine chant is still more or less universal and is always sung without instrumental accompaniment; only in certain urban parishes has it been partially displaced of recent years by that bastard child of strangely-matched parents, the so-called European chant. In its pure form the traditional plainsong can be quite ravishing in its unearthly beauty. Never shall I forget the singing of the monks of Moni Petraki who gather morning by morning in their tiny church, while Athens lies in darkness and before the first tramcar has gone clanging down the tree-lined avenue of the *Basilissa* Sophia towards the outer suburbs.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

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A THESSALIAN THEBAID

It seems a place of such stupendious solitude, as if the situation thereof had been designed for the retirement of Monks or the Cells of Anchorites.

PAUL RYCAUT

For the Quiet and innocency of their Life, the natural Beauty of the Place, the Rocks, Mountains, Streams, Woods, and curious Plants, joyn'd with the Harmonious Notes of Nightingales, and other Birds, in whole Quires, celebrating, and as it were, welcoming the forward Spring, to speak the truth, so charmed my melancholick Fancy for a time, that I had almost made a Resolution never to part with so great a Happiness, for whatever the rest of the World could present me with. But, in conclusion, it prov'd too hard a Task for me, so soon to wean myself from the World.

GEORGE WHELER
A Journey into Greece, 1682.

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THE traveller who follows the shallow streams of Peneios beyond Trikkala, with its Byzantine citadel, towards Kalambaka at the head of the Thessalian plain, will observe, long before the ruined cottages and hastily improvised dwellings of that oft-destroyed township come into view, a singular group of fantastically shaped rocks rising abruptly from the plain. As he draws nearer and the mountains close in on either hand he will distinguish what appear to be human habitations occupying seemingly inaccessible sites among these monstrous crags and pinnacles. Above Kalambaka itself the limestone cliffs tower toward heaven, "asperous, craggy, and barren"; a few monasteries and hermitages clinging as it seems miraculously to the very brink of the abyss, in defiance alike of the violence of the elements and of the laws of gravity. These are the Meteora monasteries, so extraordinary in their situation that one is disposed to accept the local belief that God formed

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

these strange rocks for the peculiar benefit of the communities of stylites who, in the fulness of time, were to build their chapels and hermitages upon their barren summits. Assuredly, there are few places on earth so admirably fitted to serve as a refuge for those who are called to the solitary life and to the labour of the angels as this rocky wilderness above Kalambaka.

The early history of the monasteries is lost in obscurity. We cannot say at what period the first solitaries found their way to this remote corner of Thessaly. It seems clear, however, that certainly before the end of the thirteenth century, and perhaps considerably earlier, there were many hermits scattered about this wild region. *Staghi* (as Kalambaka, the ancient Aeginion, was known in the Middle Ages), seems to be a contraction of *eis tous aghious*—the name is still preserved in the official title of the Metropolitan of Trikka and Staghi. It may have been many years before the unorganised eremitical life crystallised into anything in the nature of regular communities. Many of the monasteries trace their origins to the troubled epoch during the latter part of the fourteenth century when the Emperor of the Serbs carried on an intermittent campaign against the successors of Constantine from his base at Trikkala, a few miles further down the valley of the Peneios, and the desert of the solitaries was invaded by armed bands and by men whose warfare was not with principalities and powers. The hermits took refuge among the high rocks. How they first succeeded in establishing themselves on some of the apparently unscalable heights which are now surmounted by the crumbling ruins of their cells is one of the unfathomed mysteries of monastic history—though there are explanations to be heard in the mountain villages of Pindos.

Between 1356 and 1372 there came to Staghi a monk trained in the great coenobia of Mount Athos, Athanasius by name, who founded on the summit of the Platys Lithos—the vast mass of rock which towers to a height of more than 1,800 feet to the north of Kastraki—the monastery dedicated in honour of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour which has ever since been known as the Great Meteoron. As darkness descended upon the glories of New Rome, and the church of the Holy Wisdom—"the most fayr Chirche and the most noble of alle the world"—fell into the hands of the infidel, the desert blossomed and a flourishing group of monasteries sprang up among the barren rocks. The Great Meteoron prospered and served as a model for other foundations, thanks to the wisdom of its founder and to the benefactions of

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

175 792 346 the wife of the Despot of Ioannina, whose brother, Ioasaph, had come to Staghi as a postulant in 1388. By the sixteenth century there would seem to have been as many as twenty-four communities scattered about the rocks.

The convent of St. Stephen, built on the site of a hermitage founded in 1312, lies on the farther side of a chasm spanned by a drawbridge. [406] In order to gain access to most of the monasteries, however, it was necessary to be hoisted in a net lowered from the gate-house of the monastery (commonly situated some 150 feet above the farthest point [417] to which the traveller could attain by his own unaided efforts), or to clamber up ladders somewhat imperfectly secured by long wooden pegs to the face of the precipice. Travellers' accounts abound in references to the perils of either means of ascent: to frayed ropes which were replaced only after a catastrophe had actually occurred, and to the horrors of ladders hung perpendicularly upon the face of the cliff, below which, as Curzon relates: "the precipice went sheer down to so tremendous a depth, that my head turned when I surveyed the distant valley over which I was hanging in the air like a fly on a wall." It was not until 1925 that, as the result of the construction of some rough tunnels and steps, it became possible to reach the four monasteries then inhabited without considerable hazard to life and limb. The alterations then effected are bitterly lamented by the present *Igoumenos* of the Great Meteoron, the Archimandrite Callinicos, as a misguided concession to episcopal infirmity on the part of his predecessor. It seemed very [406] doubtful, however, whether the combined energies of the few remaining monks would suffice to operate their ancient windlass at all effectively. Curzon (who visited the Meteora in 1834) speaks of the ten or twelve monks at Aghia Trias who pulled him up to their monastery with a rope thirty-two fathoms long, and of the like number of reverend stevedores who assembled at the bars of the capstan at St. Barlaam, and whose efforts had the somewhat disconcerting effect of lifting him off the floor in his net and launching him "out of the door right into the sky, with an impetus which kept me swinging backwards and forwards at a fearful rate". To-day, the largest community can muster no more than half a dozen monks, of whom two are well advanced in years.

A great transformation has indeed come about since the days of prosperity vividly depicted in an old print which hangs in the sadly dilapidated guest-chamber of the Great Meteoron. More than twenty

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

monasteries are there represented, each one inaccessible on its rock. Wayfarers seeking hospitality strive to attract the notice of monastic porters, remote and unheeding in their aerial gate-houses. Venerable bearded figures in flowing black robes dangle in nets above the abyss, or swing with grave and solemn motion upon rope-ladders; while their brethren labour unceasingly at windlasses and capstans high above the earth, and hoist provisions, firewood and travellers to their fastnesses among the rocks.

The Thebaid of Staghi to-day presents a very different picture: no more than four of the original twenty-four foundations are now inhabited. The history of the monasteries from the sixteenth century onwards is one long record of steadily declining numbers. There were interminable struggles for supremacy between the abbots of the Great Meteoron and the superiors of the hermitage of Panaghia Doupiani, who strove to retain their ancient title of 'Father of the ascetics of Staghi'. Discord rent the communities, there were disputes concerning the lands belonging to the monasteries, and before long the number of those inhabited was reduced to fourteen. The English travellers Holland and Hughes, who paid brief visits to the Meteora during the early part of the nineteenth century, found only ten remaining. During the further twenty years that elapsed before the advent of the Hon. Robert Curzon with his escort of brigands three more convents were abandoned.

As late as 1830 many of the caves which mark the perpendicular rock face were apparently inhabited: though whether by hermits or, as seems more probable, by refugees, is not entirely clear. Urquhart describes these cave-dwellings: some "like handsome houses, with regular landing-places, windows and projecting balconies", others, the smaller and meaner ones, "shut in with basket work, with a hole to enter by", and reached by curious ladders hanging like chains, some of which were drawn up when their lord and master was installed in his aerial dwelling; while those which were longer and gave access to the more elevated among the caves were pulled up fifteen or twenty feet from the ground and let down with "a strange clattering noise". All have been swept away and only the dark holes in the face of the cliff remain. By 1911 only thirty-eight monks were left, dispersed among four communities: the Great Meteoron, Aghios Barlaam, Aghios Stephanos and Aghia Trias. A monk from the Belgian monastery of Amay, who visited the Meteora in 1931, found the number of the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

175 792 [162] monks still further reduced to twenty-one. A decade of war has added a catastrophic chapter to this melancholy tale of gradual decline, for it was not possible that the monks should remain aloof from the calamities which have befallen their native land during those terrible years. The day was long since flown when the monks could look down from the security of their rocky retreats upon scenes of slaughter and pillage as armies came and went on the plain below; and, turning away with the sign of the cross and a *Kyrie eleison*, go back to their labours. The unscalable heights were impregnable no longer.

792 123 [491] I spent several days at the monasteries in January 1950, accompanied by a young theologian from the Russian Academy in Paris. Heavy falls of snow had blocked the Metsovo pass—the one road that leads north-westwards from Kalambaka across the heights of Pindos, connecting the plain of Thessaly with Ioannina and Epirus—and the cold was intense. We had slept the previous night at Trikkala, where the Metropolitan had shown us a number of charred manuscripts which had been salvaged from the monasteries. Our first concern upon reaching Kalambaka the following morning was to seek out the curate of the place, Father Christos Benda, whom we discovered wrapped in a blanket at his fireside. He was not a little startled at the sudden apparition of two Frankish visitors in the doorway of his cottage, and regarded somewhat gloomily our proposal to sleep at the monasteries for the duration of our stay, assuring us (not without reason, as we subsequently discovered), that the monks had little enough bedding to protect their own persons from the bitter winds which swept the exposed summits. He promised, nevertheless, to come with us to look for the *Igoumenos* of the Great Meteoron who was said to have descended from his airy retreat that morning in order to deal with some piece of monastic business. First, however, we were taken to see the fourteenth-century basilica with its remarkable marble *ambon*, and to visit the school, where we found classes of 150 children overflowing the one available building (which had perforce to serve as primary school in the forenoon and as high school for the rest of the day), and packed into two small chapels which had been furnished with desks. The children were delighted at the diversion caused by the appearance of the *xenoi*. Papa Christos carried us off in search of the abbot who was finally run to earth in a tavern where, monastic business satisfactorily despatched, he was disposing of a dish of vegetables.

[346] [871]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

A THESSALIAN THEBAID

An hour or so later we were scrambling up the chasm which separates the Platys Lithos from the adjacent massif of Drakospelaia. Hundreds of feet above us the walls of the monastery of St. Barlaam stood out, a ragged fringe of ivory, against the sky. The *Igoumenos* reined in his pony and pointed out to us the site of the monastic prisons, high in the towering cliffs above Kastraki.

"Your names once again, that I may remember them?"

"Boris and Petros."

"Boris and Petros", repeated Father Callinicos, readjusting the bundles of leeks which festooned his saddle, "*na tisthe kala!*"

"The *Kyrios* Boris", he went on, as we relapsed into single file, "is from Paris, and yet, you say is Orthodox?"

"He is indeed Orthodox, O *Igoumenos.*"

"But the Christians of Paris are of another dogma, are they not? Are they not Catholics?"

My exposition of the state of the Christians of Paris and of the condition of the erring patriarch of the west was cut short as the gatehouse of the Great Meteoron came into view in breath-taking perspective. We gained the narrow platform of rock at the head of the gully, immediately below the monastery, and Gregorios threw back his head and sent cries of *Agathangelle!* echoing and re-echoing among the high rocks.

> Having reached the foot of the precipice, says Curzon, we stopped in the middle of this dark chasm and fired a gun . . . which was intended to answer the same purpose as knocking at the door in more civilised places; and we all strained our necks in looking up at the monastery to see whether any answer would be made to our call. Presently we were hailed by some one in the sky, whose voice came down to us like the cry of a bird; and we saw the face and grey beard of an old monk some hundred feet above us peering out of a kind of window or door. . . . Presently, after a careful reconnoitring from several long-bearded monks, a rope with a net at the end of it came slowly down to us, a distance of about twenty-five fathoms; and being bundled into the net, I was slowly drawn up into the monastery, where I was lugged in at the window by two of the strongest of the brethren, and after having been dragged along the floor and unpacked, I was presented to the admiring gaze of the whole reverend community, who were assembled round the capstan.

5\Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

THE WATERS OF MARAH

346 792 [406] *Autres temps, autres mœurs.* "Unhappily", said Father Callinicos, as we waited at the foot of the precipice and Gregorios unsaddled the pony, "there have been regrettable changes; formerly there was great security." The windlass, it appeared, was now used only for hauling up firewood and victuals. We took a last look at the leeks, now 100 feet above our heads, and entered the dark passage which gives access to the steps leading to the monastery. Agathangellos was awaiting us outside the now disused refectory: a youngish monk, clad in a tattered grey cassock and soft cap, who had come to the Meteora, we subsequently discovered, in 1939. He carried us off to the guest-chamber (little used in these days) and left us among the faded memorials [796] of former splendour while he went in search of refreshment. A few minutes later the insistent clamour of the *semandron* summoned us to vespers in the fine *catholicos*, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century, where Athanasius the Athonite, clad in the habit of a western monk, looks down from the apse—a fragment of an earlier church on the [262] same site, built by Ioasaph in 1388. A frugal supper of vegetables, [352] goats' milk cheese and bread followed, and afterwards we sat on [372] wooden stools round a fire of brushwood and talked to the *Igoumenos* and the other members of his little family, while Agathangellos busied himself in the kitchens, where cats as lean as the stylite saints depicted 792 in the frescoes of the narthex lurked in the shadows. Father Callinicos, we discovered, had been at the Great Meteoron for nearly forty years. There was one other priest in the community: a Father Theophylaktos who had lived in the Athonite house of Xeropotamou for several years as a simple monk before he was ordained and came to Thessaly in 1935. Another monk—also named Callinicos—had been carried off by the Italians and had died in exile. Apart from Father Agathangellos, the only remaining member of the community was a very ancient personage named Paul who appeared to lead the life of a solitary, and whom we but dimly discerned amidst the shadows of the church. Gregorios, who had accompanied us from Kalambaka, was no monk but a married man with a wife and several children, lately returned to their village in the mountains to the west of Trikkala. We encountered him again some ten days later, breasting a snow-covered ridge among the foothills of Pindos with a couple of heavily-laden pack-animals, and accompanied by a little troop of refugees on their way home after three years in Kalambaka.

[796] [346] Shortly after eight o'clock Father Agathangellos reappeared with a

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

huge iron lantern, to lead the way along rickety galleries and past rows of long-abandoned cells to the church. We shivered in our stalls while compline was shrilly chanted, without book and by the light of a single guttering candle, in the narthex. "They are so expert and ready therein", says Rycaut, "that they can run from the beginning to the ending without stop or hesitation, and gallop it over at that rate, that one must have a good ear and some skill in the Greek language, to distinguish the different sound of the words which they utter." As the monastic day ended, the monks emerged from the shadows of the *narthex*, and, one by one, filed past the *Igoumenos* to ask his forgiveness and blessing, and he theirs:

"Your blessing, holy father, and forgive me, a sinner."

"May God forgive you, holy father."

At the Great Meteoron, despite the gloomy prophecies of those who had tried to dissuade us from staying at the monasteries, there were plenty of blankets, and we slept soundly till, long before the dawn, the *semandron* recalled us to church for mattins and lauds. We groped our way towards the door of the narthex, slipping and stumbling on the ice-bound rocks and mindful of Father Agathangellos' parting exhortation to "avoid the edge of the abyss". The whole world seemed wrapt in an unfathomable silence—infinitely remote there floated up out of the vast emptiness at our feet the faint clink of a chain, where a mule moved restlessly in the camp at Kalambaka. We crept into the church with the unearthly chant rising and falling in our ears. Agathangellos, a candle held between his fingers, swayed back and forth at his lectern, a solitary pool of yellow light in the universal blackness; an occasional movement from the remoter recesses of the darkened church betrayed the presence of other members of the community. With the first pale light of dawn mattins gave place to lauds, and as a shaft of dusty sunlight pierced the darkness, picking out the gold and crimson of antique frescoes and bringing new life to limbs rigid with the cold, Father Callinicos, from within the sanctuary, took up the ancient hymn: "Glory to Thee who hast shown us the light . . ."

When the office was ended and we had drunk a cup of coffee and a thimbleful of *ouzo*, we spent a little time exploring the monastery, now stripped of all its movable treasures. Then, after taking leave of our kind hosts, we made our way to Aghios Barlaam where we were welcomed by the Archimandrite Ambrose and a young deacon named Bessarion. The *Igoumenos* was below in Kalambaka but would be back

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

later in the day. There was, alas! no bedding at the monastery, said Father Ambrose: everything had been carried off by the Communists, to equip a field-hospital which they had established in the mountains to the northward; "What is to be done? But we will find something for you when you return this evening."

We spent the rest of the day scrambling about the rocks and visiting long-abandoned monasteries and hermitages. At St. Nicolas—fast falling into ruin, and where one must tread with circumspection—we found a few paintings remaining in the two chapels and the refectory, as well as an iron chest containing liturgical books and an eikon of the Forerunner; elsewhere, nothing save slowly crumbling masonry and the all-enveloping silence. We paid a fleeting visit to Kalambaka and returned to St. Barlaam a little before sunset laden with cognac and cigarettes. Like the Great Meteoron, this monastery, which crowns the towering cliffs of Drakospelaia, was until quite recent times inaccessible save by net and windlass. It is a sixteenth-century foundation, having been built about 1517 by two brothers from Ioannina—Nektarios and Theophanes—on the site of the fourteenth-century hermitage founded by the solitary from whom the monastery takes its name. In 1950 it was inhabited by six monks. The *Igoumenos*, Father Christopher, told us he had been at the monastery for twenty-one years, and for another twenty years at a convent to the westward of Trikkala. He was seventy-seven—twelve years older than Father Ambrose, an Athenian who was ordained many years ago at Moni Petraki in the shadow of Lykavettos. This was the only one of the monasteries where we came across any novices. Father Bessarion (who came from a village near Larissa and who had seen service with the British army in the Middle East), had been received only five months earlier, as had another young deacon, a native of Chios. There were in addition two simple monks, one of them more than ninety years old.

That night it snowed heavily. Father Bessarion produced a threadbare carpet which, folded double, afforded us a little protection against the bitter cold; and he and a shepherd from Kalambaka, who was living at the monastery, kindled a huge fire which blazed on the open hearth of our cell until morning, while the wind howled along the deserted galleries, the ancient timbers groaned and shivered, and it seemed that an exceptionally heavy squall would send the whole monastery with its domed chapels and its frail scaffolding of cells and domestic buildings spinning off into the abyss. When daylight came we seemed to be sus-

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

pended in the void, without visible contact with the world which we had revisited the previous afternoon. We returned to the *Igoumenos'* cell and sat and talked around a brazier filled with glowing charcoal, while we waited for the weather to moderate. Father Christopher told us of his own experiences during the troubled years of war; how he had been thrown into prison at Trikkala by the Italians and had escaped by jumping from a window; how several years later he had been carried off by the Communists in company with some 300 men, women and children from Kalambaka, and had been in the mountains for six days before his release; he told us too of the great monastery where he had taken the monastic habit, and of its 366 cells. Father Ambrose joined our little circle and catechised us as to our age, our families, were our parents living, were we married or *agamos*: "Certainly marriage is of God; a soldier from England and a *koritsi* from Piraeus, and God joins them. Truly, this is a great mystery, as says the apostle."

So the morning passed and at midday Father Bessarion reappeared with bean soup and bread for our lunch. By one o'clock the snow had somewhat abated, and since the visibility had increased sufficiently to enable us to see the monastery of Rosani, 500 yards distant, we decided to set out for St. Stephen where we were expected that evening. The *Igoumenos* and Father Ambrose advised us to take the easier, though less direct, path by way of Kalambaka; but being reluctant to add two miles or more to our journey in such weather we insisted on following the path which keeps to the high ground. Father Bessarion accompanied us a little way, and then, since the weather seemed to be improving, he left us after giving us precise directions as to our route.

All went well for a time, despite the fact that the path was entirely obscured beneath the drifting snow, and Rosani (formerly the dwelling of an aged female solitary) gradually faded from our view. Shortly afterwards, however, the mist thickened until visibility was but a few yards, and it was not long before we were in difficulties. For a time we crept along the edge of the abyss, edging our way cautiously across expanses of bare rock scoured by the wind, a thin coating of ice affording none save the most precarious foothold, until it seemed that we must be within a stone's throw of Aghia Trias. Alas! there were no monks left to answer our shouts; no slight thinning of the mist afforded us a momentary glimpse of the encompassing heights such as would have sufficed to give us our bearings. For three hours we wandered in an unfamiliar world until, an hour before dark, the mist lifted somewhat,

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

574 and we found ourselves clear of the rocky wilderness, among low hills covered with dwarf oaks, and detected the distant barking of a dog. We struck down the bed of a torrent in the direction of the sound and came, after some forty minutes, upon a fold of muddy sheep guarded by two shepherd-lads, who, startled though they were at our sudden appearance, directed us to the nearby hamlet of Kopraina. In the gathering darkness, and as men with long-barrelled guns converged upon us from all sides, we entered the village, and bursting in upon an astonished assembly in the tavern called for the president. Ten minutes later, elated by several draughts of raw spirits, we were reclining on the presidential hearth, while the maidens of the household unlaced our boots, and our sodden outer garments steamed before a huge fire. The parish priest arrived in breathless haste to welcome the strangers, and the whole village buzzed with the news of our unlooked-for advent.

That night we enjoyed the hospitality of the village president, who had fought with Zervas in the mountains of Epirus, and who slept like a good soldier with a greatcoat for pillow and a loaded rifle beside him on the hearth. Earlier that evening he had told us of the English officer who had once come to the village, during the long years of the occupation, and who had snatched a few hours sleep in that same room where we supped, before slipping away to the mountains at daybreak.

[346] Our own visit to Kopraina was more prolonged: we were taken to see the church, the chapel in the cemetery on the hillside above the village, and the school, where a geography lesson was in progress.

The parish priest excused himself and retired to supervise the preparations which, we gathered, were even then in hand for a festal lunch.

[291] At high noon the *kapetanios* reappeared and led the way to the half-finished parsonage, where we found the parish priest drawing water from the well, his flocks and herds all about him, while his two sturdy daughters laboured excitedly in the kitchen and clattered to and fro in their wooden shoes. "*Kalos orisate*, welcome!" exclaimed Father Apostolos, setting down his bucket in great haste and rubbing his hands on the skirt of his cassock; "Come, all is ready, let us eat! Some wine,

[352] O *Papadia*!" He led the way indoors and we took our places at the festal board—a section sawn from the trunk of a great oak. It was a merry gathering, and as we feasted in this country parsonage and the children listened wide-eyed to our tales of the strange and marvellous ways of the Franks, that other world from which we had so lately descended took on a curious, dream-like quality. It was hard to realise

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

that before nightfall we should be back on the windswept heights above Kalambaka and amongst the ascetics of the Thebaid of Staghi.

A little before three o'clock Father Apostolos and the village president bade us *kalo taxidi*, after accompanying us as far as the outskirts of the village, and we set out for Aghios Stephanos with a guide. The sun had vanished beneath the jagged rim of Pindos when we at last worked our way gingerly across the icy rocks above the deserted monastery of the Holy Trinity and came suddenly upon Aghios Stephanos, four-square upon its rock like the heavenly Jerusalem, and found the whole of Thessaly lying at our feet.

Vespers was drawing to a close in the church of St. Charalambos, which stands so close to the brink of the precipice that one could, it seemed, empty the contents of a thurible into Father Christos' chicken-run below in Kalambaka. We spent two nights at this monastery before setting out for the mountain villages of Pindos, and I returned alone for a final visit some ten days later.

Of all the monasteries now inhabited St. Stephen had, it seemed evident, sustained far the greatest calamities as the result of war. Sacked first by the Italians and later by the Communists, it was a mere shell of a building, its unglazed windows affording little protection—as we learned by bitter experience—against wind or snow. Its former guest-rooms were crammed with wrecked furniture and empty ammunition boxes, while the eikons in the smaller of the two churches (the chapel dedicated to St. Stephen) had been wantonly defaced. Almost everything of value had been carried off when the monastery was pillaged: vestments and plate, an ancient gold cross from Mount Athos, five horses and mules, 130 sheep, provisions and fodder, beds and bedding, pots and pans, crockery and cutlery, carpets, even the bee hives, and—needless to add—the excellent wine for which the monastery was renowned in former days. The few surviving monks lacked the barest necessities of life and it was hardly surprising that sickness should have taken a heavy toll of this and the other communities during the winter months. The *Igoumenos* of St. Stephen's was the Deacon Anthimos, who came to the Meteora between the wars from the great Athonite house of Vatopedi—"a good house and garden . . . snakes very big and long in it", notes Dr. Covel. There were also living at St. Stephen three simple monks—lay-brothers, as they would be called in the west—Ephrem, who had been a monk for twenty years, Eusebius, who was formerly a policeman, and Cyril. Whilst we were staying at the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

beginning of this century. Eikosiphoinisses suffered grievously at the hands of the Bulgars in 1913 and again five years later. All its flocks and herds were driven off and the monastery was looted of most of its treasures—precious manuscripts, vestments, holy vessels and reliquaries. There could, therefore, be little room for doubt as to the fate in store for it when the Bulgars again swarmed into Greece in the wake of the German forces in the summer of 1941.

The history of the convent from this time down till its destruction three years later is obscure. The pillage of its remaining property seems to have commenced about two months after the Bulgars had descended upon Drama and expelled the Greek clergy; a certain Botseph, Bulgarian *protosyngellos* of the metropolis, celebrated the festival of the Dormition of the Mother of God by stealing from the monastery a mitre, an ancient chalice, six silver crosses such as are used for the blessing of the waters at Epiphany, sundry liturgical vestments and ten manuscripts on parchment from the library. Some six weeks later several Bulgarian officers were moved to emulate the pious labours of this worthy ecclesiastic. They returned from their expedition to the heights of Pangaion driving before them a train of asses laden with clothing, furniture and other tangible fruits of their pilgrimage.

Another Bulgar, Sophronios Natseph, the *epitropos*, makes a fleeting and discreditable appearance upon the stage of Greek history on June 20th, 1943, on which day he despoiled Eikosiphoinisses of seventeen carpets, ninety-eight goats and as much bedding as he and his accomplices were able to bear away with them down the rocky paths.

The final chapter in this catalogue of infamy was written a little more than a year after this episode when, on July 13th, 1944—a few months before they fled from the scene of their barbarous crimes—the Bulgars set fire to the monastery and destroyed it utterly. Only the *catholicon* (which stood somewhat apart in the centre of the great courtyard) and a single block of cells survived the conflagration; the rest of the convent, including a three-storied edifice said to contain 300 cells, the bakery and the refectory (dating from the eleventh century), and all the stables and outbuildings were gutted. Before setting fire to the monastery the Bulgars looted it of everything of value and drove off all the live-stock. The library, which contained some 1,500 volumes, was reduced to ashes.

All the monks of this monastery endured great hardship and privation. One was executed by the Bulgars; another died as the result of the treatment which he suffered at their hands. The former was the *monachos*

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

THE WATERS OF MARAH

727 795 By the summer of 1950 it had become possible to gain some notion of the full extent of the material destruction which the Church had sustained since the beginning of the war; although with large tracts of northern Greece uninhabited until a few months before, the compiling of accurate statistics—never a simple matter—presented problems such as only one who had been in Greece during the last few years could hope to appreciate fully. I have already referred to the wholesale destruction of churches and monasteries. This, though serious enough, was perhaps most easily remedied. I remember one bishop who chuckled inordinately when I questioned him on this subject; "All that is necessary", he assured me, "is that I should go in person to the village with a spade and set to work, and then: *Panaghia!* in no time at all the whole village will turn out and a new church will be built before one can say a *kathisma* of psalms!"

More serious, perhaps, and not confined to those villages where the fabric of the church had been demolished, was the acute shortage of liturgical books, chalices, vestments, and other accessories of worship which could not be supplied from local resources. The dearth of [213] service-books, in particular, was occasioning widespread difficulty. Old Venetian editions had been brought in from long-abandoned monasteries and remote hill-top chapels which had escaped pillage—though the antique characters in which many of them were printed, while intelligible enough to the experienced monk, made it difficult for the average *papas* (to say nothing of the village choir) to read the service with any facility.

727 793 346 I remarked in an earlier chapter that the metropolis is as a rule one of the most impressive and substantial buildings of a provincial town. In 1950, however, several bishops were homeless. The Metropolitan of Grevena was living in lodgings, having one room for his personal use and another which served as the diocesan office; the Lord Agathangellos of Nevrokopi was living in the most apostolic simplicity in two barely furnished rooms; nor, amongst the provincial 'saints', were such cases exceptional.

727 794 Faced by a catastrophe so complete and overwhelming, the first concern of the Church was to try to meet the urgent demand for the bare necessities of life: for food, clothing and shelter. Everywhere the response was the same: orphanages, homes for refugee children, centres for the distribution of food and clothing, clinics and hospitals, were

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

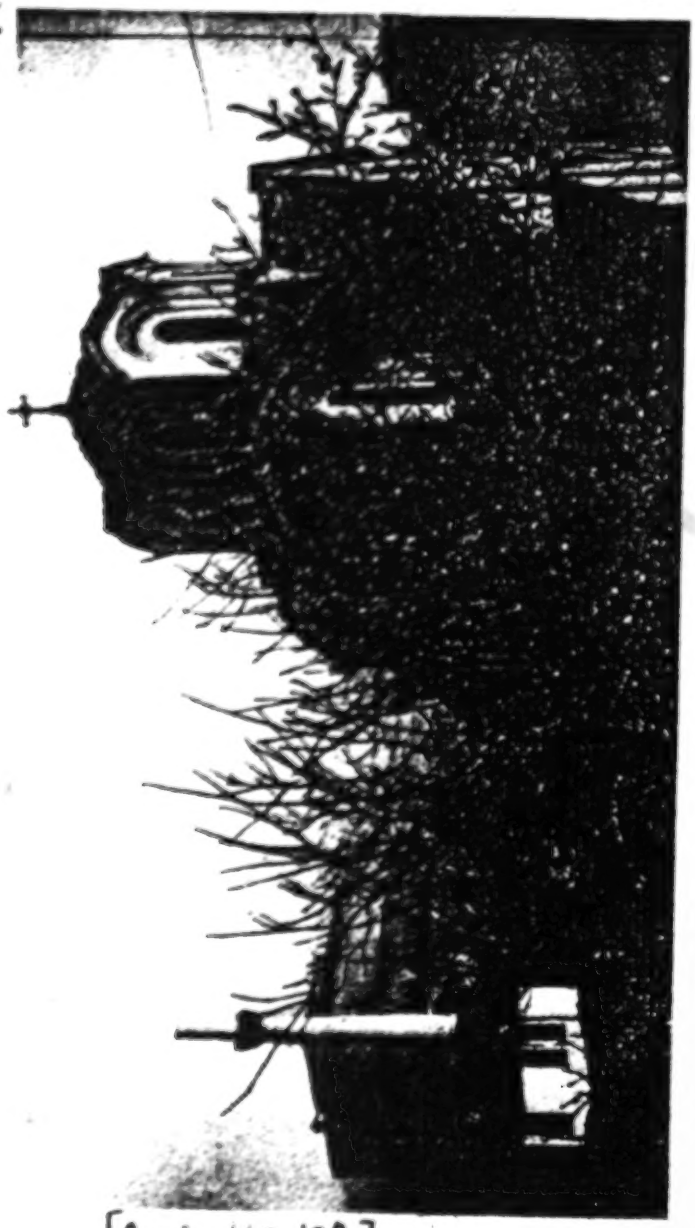
346
532
727

II The church at Ziakas

[facing p. 102]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

• 346



III Byzantine Salonica

[facing p. 103]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

my journey with an escort of seven soldiers, and with a corporal of the gendarmerie as guide.

At three o'clock we reached Mavronoros, the 'Black Mountain'; a small village, quite deserted and in ruins. Somewhat surprisingly, the church (which was dedicated to St. Theodore) had survived the bombardment. A single projectile had apparently found its mark and a portion of the vault had collapsed, but the walls were sound enough and the paintings which covered them had not as yet suffered greatly from exposure to the elements. A chapel on the hill above the village was completely gutted and almost every house was in ruins. So complete was the destruction that we were unable to identify the remains of the school.

A brief halt and we set out towards Ziakas, where I was to spend the night. We followed a water-course for some distance before intercepting the mule track. The ground had thawed since morning and the going was laborious. On a ridge commanding a wide prospect of this abandoned countryside we met the relief escort from the Ziakas garrison, and I reluctantly relinquished my handsome mount for a mule saddled after the school of Macedonia. We crossed the Venetikos by an ancient bridge and reached the headquarters of the garrison, a kilometre below the ruins of the village, a little before sunset.

It was too late to see anything of Ziakas that day, but the isolated community was delighted to have a visitor and the evening passed merrily enough. The night was chilly and I slept fitfully. From the mountains, which rise to close on 5,000 feet above the village, came the howling of wolves and jackals. Two wolves had ventured into Mavranaioi itself a few nights earlier, and, despite the vigilance of the sentries, had attacked and killed one of the mules picketed amongst the cottages. There had been neither sheep nor goats in these mountains for more than three years.

The morning was cold and cheerless without trace of sun. I took leave of my hosts about half-past nine and was accompanied to the village by a young lieutenant from Salonica. Ziakas had not only been burned by the Germans; it had more than once been the scene of heavy fighting within the last three years. The church stood at the entrance to the village. It was completely ruined, but a few paintings still clung to the walls of the apse, and, amidst the waste and desolation wrought by man's sin, the Son of the Virgin, the Alpha and the Omega, raised His hands in blessing. The destruction of the village—one of the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

largest in the region—was complete and spectacular. The shattered walls were daubed with Communist slogans. We threaded our way amongst the ruined houses to a building on the farthest side of the village which had been roughly repaired to afford shelter for an advanced outpost, drank a glass of cognac whilst my escort laced up their boots and buckled on their equipment, and left for Spelaion and Trikomon shortly after eleven.

The paths were ice-bound and treacherous, the snow deep in places. Spelaion came into view after half an hour, set amongst towering cliffs. A long and laborious ascent between high rocks, the Venetikos murmuring through its gorge far below, the path clinging to precipitous cliffs rising from the dwarf oaks and myrtle to lose themselves in the grey mists that swirled about their summits, brought us to a point immediately below the village. After a stiff climb through massive fortifications of uncertain date, we suddenly found ourselves looking down upon a tiny Byzantine church with twin domes, sharply outlined against the untrodden snow; a sombre red jewel laid in a setting of purest white.

This proved to be the catholicon of a small monastery, dedicated to the Mother of God. The interior of the church was dark and silent as a tomb; within the sanctuary liturgical books, eikons and vestments were strewn in confusion. The book of the Gospels lay closed upon the holy table, between two reliquaries of tarnished silver. We found a few stumps of candle and lighted them before the eikons of the Lord and His Mother; the spluttering flames banished the darkness and disclosed the presence of a host of emaciated figures gazing down upon us from wall and eikonostasis. We said a prayer and withdrew.

Though the church was undamaged, the other buildings which enclosed three sides of the roughly quadrangular space occupied by the monastery were all in ruins. Below, in the centre of the village, we found a second church, dedicated to St. Athanasius. This too had escaped serious damage, though the windows were unglazed and dead leaves lay piled against the eikonostasis and rustled about the throne of the bishop. Inaccessible on the cliffs above the Venetikos, Spelaion seemed built to withstand a siege, and we were not surprised to find that it had apparently served as a base for the *katsapliades*. A large house in the centre of the village had evidently been the Communist headquarters, and party slogans were scrawled over every wall. When we returned to the monastery, where the animals had been tethered, the candles still

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

727 flickered within the church. Leaving the saints to their solitary vigil we plunged deeper into the uninhabited wastes that stretched southward toward Metsovo and the Thebaid of Staghi.

During the course of the next four days we worked our way eastwards to Trikomon and Kipouryio, and then turned north towards Mavranaioi and Grevena, to complete the first part of my itinerary. At three of the villages on our route there were isolated garrisons: otherwise the whole district lay abandoned. We passed through hamlet after hamlet where every house was destroyed, where churches stood open to the skies and no living creature broke the three-year silence. At Kipouryio the chapel [669] of St. Paraskeve—a saint whose apparent connexion with the sixth day [346] of the week (in Greek, *paraskeve*, the day of preparation) has given rise [776] to some very singular local cults in the country districts—had been stripped of its furnishings and turned into a hospital by the Communists: empty bottles and boxes which had contained medical supplies lay strewn about the building.

[657] Upon our return to Grevena we encountered a vast multitude of ragged children straggling back towards the refugee camp, grasping huge slabs of bread and honey: more than 4,000 children were being fed daily at the *estia* outside the high school. We found the Lord Theokletos a little concerned lest I should have fallen into the hands of the *katsapliades*—communications in the mountains out beyond Mavranaioi were notoriously unreliable. I waded through the mud 484 with my captain from Volos to call on the colonel of the local militia, under whose protection I should be travelling for the rest of my itinerary. There was no news to be had anywhere save of the forthcoming elections.

At ten o'clock the following morning we were making slow progress westwards through melting snow: four militiamen, the president of the village of Elatos and myself; a large American mule floundering astern 727 with the baggage. Above the ruins of Doxaras we turned aside to view 346 the pile of stones which was all that remained of the church of St. George. A few families had returned to this hamlet and were living in nissen huts on the hillside below the ruined church. The whole village had been destroyed.

An hour later we found ourselves among the newly built cottages of Elatos. Above a cluster of wretched *kalyvai* rose the fabric of an unfinished church. The village, the president told us, had been burned down in July, 1942, and reduced to ruins. The work of rebuilding was begun

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

in 1945, but two years later the people fled to Grevena and all was left unfinished. Some fifty families had returned in November, 1949, and were now settled in their old houses. The church which was to replace that destroyed by the Germans stood roofless: the windows unglazed, the eikonostasis of rough-hewn timbers. There was a tiny chapel dedicated to the prophet Elias on the brow of the hill, half a mile beyond the village, where the holy mysteries had been celebrated for a time. Now the church which was in Elatos assembled Sunday by Sunday for the breaking of the bread in the half-finished structure which dominated the village.

Whilst we were within the church there was a murmuring amongst the crowd that had gathered in the snow outside: shouts of "Behold! He comes. Make haste, O Papa Iannis!" The parish priest had just returned from Grevena, having followed a more direct route than ourselves. He came scrambling up through the orchard below the church, a ragged figure clad in *kalymmafchion* and tattered overcoat, his boots heavy with mud, his cassock slung across his shoulder, clawing his way up the slope with the aid of a shepherd's staff. We all retired to the *taverna* for a glass of ouzo, and then, after despatching three of the escort with the baggage-mule, the rest of my party (together with two lads from the local militia and the indefatigable Papa Iannis, who, despite his seventy-three years, had already covered the best part of ten miles that morning), set out for the neighbouring village of Anavryta—a deserted hamlet set on the brink of a deep chasm where the inky thread of the Venetikos lay twisted in the pale sunlight. Far away against the towering ramparts of Pindos the ruins of Ziakas could be distinguished: a dark stain on the white vesture which enfolded the silent countryside.

The more enterprising of the Anavrytans had found lodging in the recently reoccupied village of Kallirachi (where we spent the following night) and were planning to return to their houses in the spring. The parish priest at Kallirachi had improvised a temporary oratory where he said the daily offices. The church lay in ruins, and the liturgy was celebrated in a tiny chapel dedicated to St. Demetrius of Thessalonica, a full kilometre from the village. I left my escort at Kallirachi and set out early with a couple of local guides for Megaron, the largest village of the district and, like Kallirachi, reoccupied by its inhabitants some two months earlier. Here I made but a brief stay, as I was anxious to reach Kydonies (which lay well outside the inhabited zone) and get

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

back to a populated village before nightfall. The *kapetanios* of the local militia undertook to have an escort ready by noon, and in the meantime the parish priest carried me off to the refectory of the police station (where we broke our fast) and thence to see the parish church: an ancient structure roofed with corrugated iron, the walls bulging and sagging ominously at several points.

By one o'clock I was riding westwards on a handsome white mule, with an escort of local militia, armed to the teeth, in line ahead and astern, and all the mountains of Macedonia spread out around the horizon. Kydonies, where we arrived a little after three o'clock, was utterly deserted. It had been a large village (some 175 families, according to my escort), and the destruction was more restricted than in many villages of this region. The church, like that at Elatos, had apparently been left uncompleted when the people fled: a temporary chapel which occupied the position of the outer narthex was in a ruinous condition. Several eikons lay half buried amongst the fallen masonry. The whole building, like the ruined school-house adjoining it, was daubed with democratic slogans.

The parish priest of Kydonies, Papa Athanasius Toskas, had been murdered by the Germans who fell upon the village on July 7th, 1944. Papa Athanasius, despite his sixty-seven years, had gathered up his skirts and made for the forest as fast as his legs would carry him, in company with the curate of the neighbouring village of Ekklesia, Papa Nicolas Tsabiri. The latter succeeded in making good his escape, but Papa Athanasius was surrounded and captured. His body was found some days later, barbarously mutilated. His ears and hands had been cut off, his beard set on fire, and his chest and back slashed with knives. All about the village were little chapels: one which we passed, as we recrossed the stream at the foot of the hill and turned towards Rodia, had been burned down.

I lay that night at the house of George Sabbas: the house where his brother had been killed before his eyes three years earlier and whence he had fled into the darkness to blunder about the wooded hills all night before reaching Aghios Georgios and safety. The people of Rodia had returned home only two months earlier. The youngest of my host's three sons had married the daughter of the parish priest, and this young woman now kept house for her father-in-law. After supper who should appear but Father Athanasius, the *ephemerios*, who proved to be an old friend from the Kozani seminary. He had come home for the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

week-end. Conversation turned to the subject of the parish clergy; Papa Athanasi was a whole-hearted admirer of the new system; he was not one who could learn only from the Lord or rest content with a mere facility in turning the pages of the service-books:

"The divine liturgy, *Kyrie Petre*, can be gabbled through by a man who is all but illiterate: *we* are called to be shepherds, and a shepherd has need of great knowledge and wisdom."

Next morning Father Athanasius celebrated the holy mysteries in the village church. It was one of the Saturdays of all souls, and the priest's daughter was early astir, making preparations for the commemoration of departed relatives and friends. Before the service was ended I left for the neighbouring village of Sydendron, where the curate, Papa Constantinos, introduced himself as "the priest who bore the machine-gun in the sacred company of the despot". St. Nicolas, Sydendron, had been a fine church, apparently dating from the sixteenth century. It had survived the years of occupation only to be set on fire by the Communists on the night of July 25th, 1947. The ancient frescoes were slowly crumbling away, but sufficient remained to show something of the former splendour of the church.

I lunched at the presbytery and rode on to Amygdalies in the early afternoon. Most of the village's 200 children seemed to be dancing barefoot in the sun outside their newly opened school: a nissen hut erected on the site of the building destroyed by the Germans in July, 1943. A huge new church was in process of construction, but work was at a standstill through lack of funds, and the liturgy had to be celebrated in a brick chapel hastily constructed in 1946 within the walls of the unfinished church. Being anxious to reach Aghios Georgios before nightfall I resisted the efforts of the parish priest to persuade me to stay the night at Amygdalies, and as twilight deepened into darkness came clattering down the steep slopes to the stream where a few children still lingered, on a mule which I would have pitted even against Urquhart's Aristotle, and dismounted outside the house of the president.

Aghios Georgios was one of the only two villages in the diocese of Grevena where the population had remained throughout the troubled years which followed the end of the occupation, and had, moreover, afforded shelter to many refugees from other communities. The church—a massive structure dating from the middle of the nineteenth century—stood on rising ground in the centre of the village. The

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

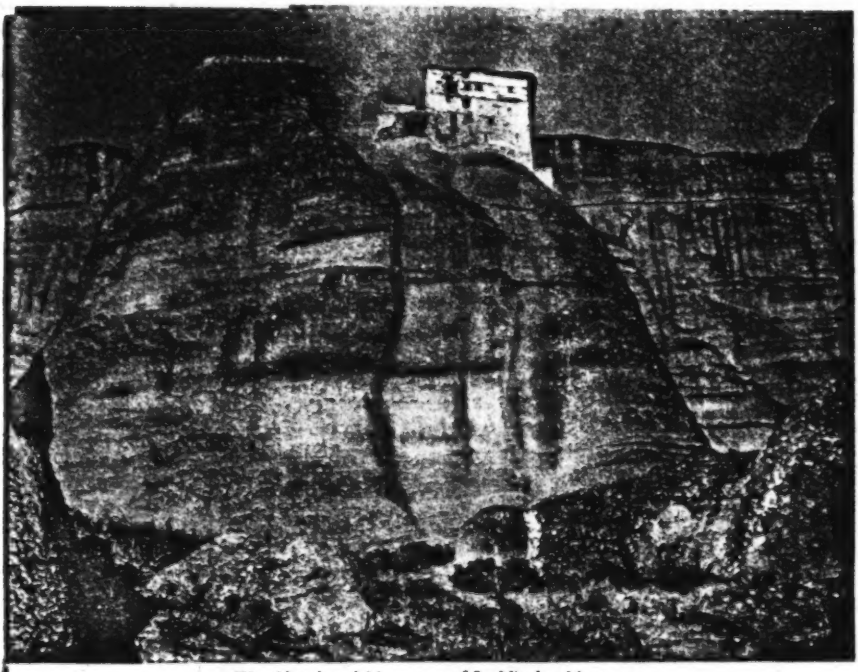
windows had been blocked with masonry and stones, and the church, thus barricaded and surrounded by an elaborate system of trenches, pill-boxes and barbed wire defences, transformed into a citadel. Here the greater part of the population had taken refuge while the militia, with a stiffening of gendarmerie, had fought off an assault on the village which raged for a night and a day on May 8th-9th, 1948. The fabric had suffered extensive damage from mortar and machine-gun fire, but the Communists had eventually been driven off. Earlier, the village had suffered grievously at the hands of the Germans. Though the church had been spared, the school and a large proportion of the houses had been destroyed. The school was now flourishing in a large nissen hut: formerly it had been housed in the nave of the church.

On Sunday morning there was great scrubbing and polishing of muddy boots, and at half-past eight I ventured forth, looking as spruce as three weeks of sleeping in my clothes would permit, in company with the *proedros*. The latter was anxious not to be too early at church, and, since the second bell had not yet sounded, we went first to inspect the new school. After smoking a cigarette with the *didaskalos* we proceeded to the church at the third bell, followed by all the children of the village. When the liturgy was ended the president climbed with great dignity to the top of one of the pill-boxes and made an impassioned oration welcoming the representative of Greece's great and traditional ally to their gallant and Christ-loving village, and dwelling at some length on the ties which, despite the infernal machinations of the Accursed of God, would surely bind together for all ages the Hellenic and British nations. The said representative thereupon made a brief, but it is to be hoped fitting, reply to this masterpiece of presidential rhetoric, and the whole company drifted away in high good humour to sip cognac and discuss the latest news which had arrived from Kozani.

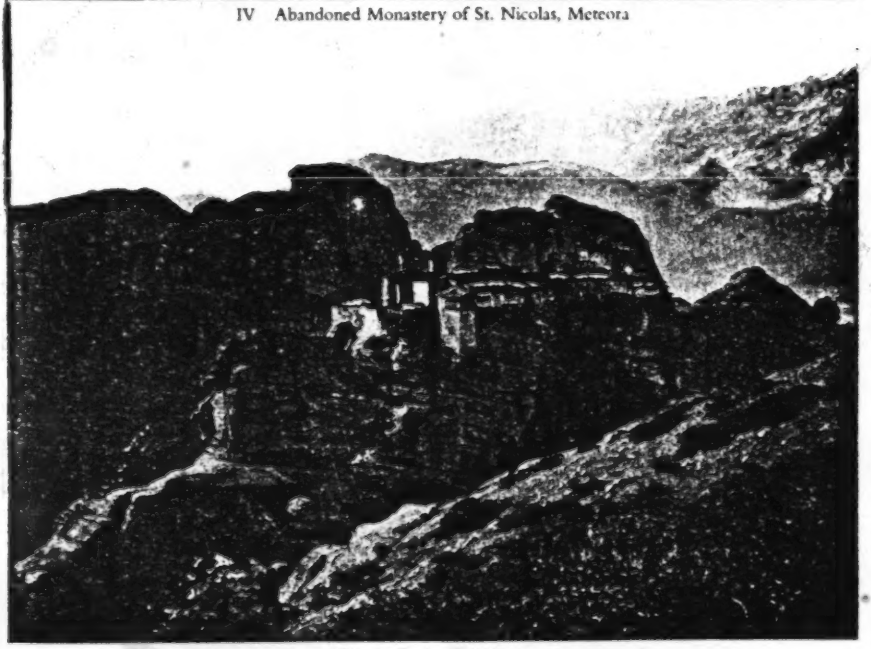
After a visit to the family of a young theologian from Salonica I went to feast, first with the president and then—at the dictates of charity rather than of appetite—with the parish priest also. The influence of the Kozani seminary had made itself felt in this village, and the catechetical school was in full swing as I passed the new school-house on my way to the parsonage. There the wine that makes glad the heart of man flowed freely, and it was a drowsy traveller who rode across the hills to the neighbouring village of Kivotos later that afternoon. Communications having proved unreliable, I was constrained to accept the hospitality of one of the churchwardens. Shortly before noon the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

133
346



IV Abandoned Monastery of St. Nicolas, Meteora



V St. Barlaam, Meteora

[facing p. 118]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

students from places as far distant as Drama and Katerini. A candidate for the two-year course which the seminary provided must have reached the fourth class of his elementary school: an event which in the case of certain of the more venerable amongst these bewhiskered scholars must have been more than a generation remote from their reappearance *in statu pupillari*.

The programme of studies, as at all these lower seminaries, was eminently practical and was related at every point to the peculiar circumstances within which the Greek country parson exercises his priestly ministry. It was grounded, as is fitting, "in the Book of books, the store-house and magazine of life and comfort, the Holy Scriptures," and, in particular, in the study of the text of the Gospels. The director was assisted by another lay theologian, the preacher of the diocese. Their lectures on the Bible, doctrine, catechising, the holy canons and liturgical matters, were supplemented by instruction in the ecclesiastical chant (given by the chief singer of the metropolis), and by talks on the rudiments of first-aid from a local doctor: for the country parson does not merely "condescend to the knowledge of tillage and pasturage"; he desires to be all to his parish, and "not only a pastor but also a physician". A little medical knowledge does indeed constitute an invaluable addition to the skills of a country priest in a region where the only known medicaments are aspirins and ouzo, and doctors are as rare as dissenters.

The seminary at Kozani was housed in a rambling, somewhat dilapidated building adjoining the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian. Its furnishing and equipment were simple in the extreme. Twice a day the lecture-room was transformed into a refectory. The students slept seven or eight to a room on straw mattresses laid on the bare boards, and St. Benedict's maxim: *stramenta . . . sufficiant matta, sagum et lena et capitale*, was observed by all alike.

The liturgical life of the seminary was centred in the church which lies on the other side of the courtyard. The whole community assembled twice daily to sing the divine office, and on Sundays and holy days the liturgy was celebrated. Those amongst the students who lived within easy distance of Kozani used to go home every Saturday and return on Monday morning after celebrating the holy mysteries in their own parish churches. They used also to go to their villages for the great festivals. In other cases some temporary provision would be made for the parishes concerned: the late Metropolitan of Grevena, for example, would allow

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

had regrettable consequences for the development of the new move- 779
ments, with which the theological schools have, in general, little vital 794
connexion—although more than one professor of the theological faculty 874
at Athens has played an important rôle in their work and organisation. In many quarters—and especially, perhaps, within Zoë circles—a sense of the apparent irrelevance of this theoretical science to practical piety has given rise to an impatience with all theological questions. We must, it is said, be *practical*—and this theology of the schools is not practical; it is a theoretical science wholly unrelated to the urgent problems which are the daily concern of the preacher and the confessor. Such an attitude cannot but strike one as curiously out of place in an Orthodox *milieu* and is not without its dangers.

A few of the clergy go abroad to continue their studies after graduating 793
from the Greek theological schools. Many a young layman is sent to 177
western Europe or America for post-graduate study in the hope that upon his return to Greece he will offer himself for ordination; but a first acquaintance with ecclesiastical conditions very different from those to which he has been accustomed (particularly in the matter of the status of the married clergy and their field of activity) can easily have an unsettling effect upon the potential *despotes*, and it is not unknown for a young graduate, not conscious of a very definite call to the celibate life, to waver in his first resolve of becoming a priest, after two or three years in England or America.

Apart from the minority who go abroad after leaving the university, 793
the celibate clergy normally pass immediately to an episcopal household 874
without further study. Until quite recently there was nothing in Greece comparable to the English theological college. Since the war, however, there has been opened in Athens an establishment which approximates in some measure to the English institution. This is the 'School for Preachers' which is housed in the hostel of the Apostoliki Diakonia: a [346] ●
fine modern building occupying two sides of the quadrangle at Moni Petraki and overlooking the garden of the British School of Archaeology. Though completed some years ago, it was long requisitioned as a military [722]
hospital, and it was not until the early part of 1950 that the whole building was made available to the Church.

The School for Preachers provides a two-year course of study [794]
(primarily of a pastoral character) for men who have already graduated from the theological school of the university. In 1950 a considerable

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

123 793 484 we abandoned the road and struck across the valley towards the river Peneios. The water lapped about our horses' bellies as we forded the swiftly flowing stream, and the potential *psaltes* had a ducking and screeched in muffled protest. Amongst the low hills beyond the river the going was far from easy, and several times we were obliged to dismount and lead our slithering beasts across some particularly difficult stretch of terrain.

[342] About eleven o'clock—soon after we had left the dilapidated cottages and recently rebuilt church of Vanakoulia to our left—we halted outside what had evidently once been a substantial stone house, but which had been burned down and only lately repaired by means of rough-hewn timbers supporting sheets of corrugated iron thrown across the ruins. Here lived Father Constantinos' godparents: well advanced in years and in wisdom, with four sons serving in the army. We broached the cognac and warmed ourselves at the hearth, while the old lady opened [262] one of the wooden chests that lined the tottering walls and brought out walnuts and the golden apples in which this part of Thessaly abounds.

Setting out again a little before noon we descended from the ridge crowned by the ruins of Vanakoulia, and turned eastwards up the boulder-strewn bed of the Aspropotamos. Throughout the rest of the day we journeyed in a desolate landscape of bleached plane trees and white stones, ground and polished by the melting snows; picking our way amongst the boulders of water courses or leading our beasts delicately along narrow paths—mere scratches in the face of the rock—winding high above the torrents and the frozen pools, the long snowy ridges of Pindos far above us.

123 793 It was nearly dark when we reached Palaiochori. Mitsos stabled the tired beasts, and the exhausted *psaltes*—long past speech or feeling—was tipped out of his sack into a pile of straw where he lay motionless. [875] Papa Costas led the way upstairs to the living quarters of his parsonage where we were welcomed by his *papadia* and the schoolmistress, a young girl lately come from Ioannina. We supped sitting tailor-wise before the fire, and soon afterwards the women brought in piles of rugs, Papa Costas divested himself of his outer *rason*, and, commending ourselves to the protection of the all-merciful God and of His saints, we all lay down on the floor and were asleep in a twinkling.

[262] In the morning, after breaking our fast with a glass of cognac and a few walnuts, we went to see the church of St. Bessarion. Papa Costas, [346] Mitsos and the churchwardens accompanied us. The interior of the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

little church was a melancholy sight: the stone eikonostasis had survived the fire but every trace of woodwork had perished. Our priest-carpenter had just completed two new lecterns for the singers and an episcopal throne: there was plenty of work to be done as soon as Leonidas—who had been discharged from the army with wounds in both hands—was home again and fit to return to his trade.

We went on to the school where sixty-four ragged children were huddled round a smoking stove. There had been no teacher in the village between the first and second periods of exile; the schoolmaster, we were told, had disappeared in 1946 and nothing had been heard of him since. Had he gone to the mountains, we asked? Nobody knew—he had disappeared. Kleoniki Zambra, the girl we had met the previous evening, had just been sent to reopen the village school. The windows of the building—roughly re-roofed by the priest and his sons—were blocked with stones and cardboard from packing cases which had contained powdered milk; light was an altogether secondary consideration when warmth was in question.

"Last Friday", the *didaskalissa* assured us, "it was so cold that the children cried aloud and we were obliged to give up." There seemed to be no books or slates or paper—there was indeed no equipment of any description save for the stove and a few wooden benches—but the school was again performing its liturgy, and the whole village was conscious that an important step had been taken along the road that led back from the anarchy and insecurity of a decade of war towards the halcyon days which none of the children who crowded the schoolhouse that January morning was capable of recalling.

Time and time again as I travelled about the ruined villages of Pindos during that terrible winter of 1949–50 it was brought home to me how essential an element the school constitutes in the pattern of Greek village life. Almost invariably the first thought of the returning refugees, once they had succeeded in improvising some temporary shelter from wind and snow, was for the church and the school. They would rest content with the most wretched living quarters, provided only that the house of God were decently furnished and their children were receiving regular instruction; but a village without a priest and a schoolmaster was a village only in name.

Urquhart arrived in Metsovo astride the sagacious Aristotle, in the summer of the year 1830, to find that mountain township in a state of the utmost panic and alarm: the houses barricaded, the sheep, cattle

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

torrent bed, and we followed while Papa Costas and Spyridon Oikonomides, the *epitropos*, stood beneath the great tree in the village square and waved farewell:

"Kalo taxeidi; o Theos mazi sas!"

A good journey; may God go with you.

At dusk we rode into Chrysomelia—a large village lying at 900 metres—after a journey which will long linger in my memory. For the best part of an hour Antony the Zealot (our guide) had questioned me relentlessly as to the constitutions and canons ecclesiastical concerning marriage with a deceased wife's sister within the jurisdiction of the *metropolites* of Canterbury, whilst the mules floundered in deep snow as we climbed laboriously towards the village, the buildings of an abandoned monastery far below among the pines. We had been delayed at the cottage of Papa Nicolas, the *geros*, till it was close on three o'clock. There had been a misunderstanding as to the rendezvous, arising, apparently, from the fact that the curate of the neighbouring hamlet of Aidona was also a Papa Costas.

It was the eve of the feast of St. Antony, and the Zealot was preparing to celebrate his name-day. In a tiny chapel on the outskirts of the shattered village vespers was drawing to a close. The village church, dating from 1580 and dedicated to St. George, was a total ruin. We stayed for the liturgy next morning and all the men and boys of the village accompanied us to church. After a distribution of the blessed bread Papa Athanasius Tsergoulas, the pastor of this mountain flock, took us to see his dwelling—a tiny cell of mud bricks set amidst the ruins of the house which he had built some thirty years earlier—and there we sat around a table in the pale sunlight outside the newly-opened tavern and sipped ouzo with the village elders, while crowds of wild, ragged children played amongst the ruins of the church—there were nearly 300 of them and it was eight years since the school had ceased to perform its liturgy.

Chrysomelia had been one of the most important villages of this region, with a population of 1,050. It had suffered at the hands of the Germans at the same time as Palaiochori. The people had begun to return in October. Scarcely a house in the whole village had escaped destruction.

The devastation was no less widespread at the hamlet of Kato Perlangion, where we slept the following night, wrapped in rugs on the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

THE WATERS OF MARAH

floor of the village president's cottage with a great fire burning at our feet. The parish priest had been awaiting us in the square, and after I had photographed the ruins of the church he rang the great bell which hung from the branches of a plane tree and the whole community gathered to sing the first vespers of the feast of St. Athanasius the Great, in a chapel which had been disused for generations and had only been repaired since the return of the refugees the previous autumn. No more than forty families had as yet found their way back to the village and the destruction was very great. The next morning it was raining heavily and the mud lay so deep in the tiny chapel that planks had to be laid down to facilitate the movements of the celebrant.

Papa Georgios Papageorgiou was himself a native of Chrysomelia. He had been ordained in the early days of the war after living for a time in the monastery of St. Stephen on the windy heights above Kalambaka. His first parish had been wiped out of existence by the Germans, and now the Lord Cherubim, Metropolitan of Trikka and Staghi, had sent him to this ruined hamlet, deep in the folds of Pindos. He lived with his 'priestess' and their four children in a wretched hovel roofed with corrugated iron a little way below the church and, in the absence of a schoolmaster, was himself acting as a temporary *didaskalos*.

We spent a night at the village of Vanakoulia on our way back to Kalambaka. When we arrived the whole population seemed to be engaged in the task of setting up a school in the narthex of the church: a severe structure only lately completed. Over the doorway was set a rough inscription in rustic Greek commemorating the destruction of the church by the Germans and its subsequent rebuilding by the inhabitants—aided, as we later discovered, by generous gifts from relatives in America.

DESTROYED BY GERMANS

1943

REBUILT

AT THE EXPENSE OF THE INHABITANTS

JUNE 1949

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

727
346
[211]

About eighty of the 200-odd houses in the village had been destroyed. The old school-house was a total ruin and would have, in due course, to be rebuilt from its very foundations. The church of St. Menas had been reopened, and the desks and benches which had arrived a few days earlier had been stacked in the narthex. There was tremendous excitement in the village at the prospect of the reopening of the school. [872] The schoolmaster, who was directing operations when we arrived, had 875 just been released from the army. He proved to be the son of the proprietor of the largest store in Kalambaka. Needless to say, the 123 unexpected advent of the *xenoi* caused all work to be abandoned for the afternoon, and half the village accompanied us to the church. The [793] priest, a young man named Antony, was in a sanatorium near Athens. For the time being his place had been taken by a refugee *papas* from the diocese of Grevena.

The evening brought torrents of rain. We slept at the house of one [484] of the churchwardens and set out for Kalambaka the following morning. The *epitropoi* insisted on accompanying us as far as the river, as they feared lest the Peneios, swollen by the heavy rains, should prove difficult to ford. Fortunately, their anxieties were excessive, and shortly after midday on the feast of St. Euthymius the Great we rode briskly into Kalambaka. My mule, smarting under a sense of outraged propriety at its Frankish rider's use of an umbrella (borrowed from the village president at Vanakoulia) as an instrument of coercion, eyed the

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Paleo Corinthos

[Villages of the Plains]

lished by 1952. Through their instrumentality a series of important changes have come to the agriculture of the village. Fertilizer, bought through the cooperatives, has played its usual role in increasing wheat yields. In addition, a new variety of wheat has been introduced by the agricultural extension agent; this has still further increased the harvest, so that in 1956 the farmers counted on between 200 and 300 okes of wheat per stremma, compared with their prewar expectation of 80 to 100. The co-ops also have been able to buy two tractors and two harvesting machines that cultivate all the crop land of the community. These machines are hired out to neighboring villages when not needed in Old Corinth, and bring in a fair sum of money.

The most significant step, however, has been the drilling of irrigation wells. Irrigation began on a modest scale before the war, but in 1947 fuel for the pumping engines was hard to come by and many of the thirty wells the village then possessed were not used fully. By 1956 the number of wells and pumps had increased to 163, and all were in full use. Most of the suitable land in the village has come under irrigation. On this land, the villagers raise garden vegetables, especially tomatoes, and despatch them daily to the Athens market by truck. The result, in terms of money income, is spectacular. I was assured that a farm now yields ten times the income it supplied before the war.

Old Corinth has also benefited from the revival of tourism. In 1955, some 72,000 tourists visited the archaeological museum and the ruins on the outskirts of the village; and most of these visitors left at least some small change behind them in one of the coffee houses or in the new tourist restaurant which the government constructed in 1955. Moreover, Old Corinth lies near the new electric power line. Electricity came to the village for the first time in 1956. Of all the changes benefiting them in

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Cherasia

[Hill Villages]

669 722 [727] too, burned some houses, including those belonging to the three "rich" families of the community. These had fled to Volos, together with some other families from the village. The people who remained were inclined to support the guerrillas.

About two weeks after my visit in 1947, the army evacuated all the remaining inhabitants of Cherasia to Volos. There they remained in refugee quarters for two and a half years. The last guerrilla band disappeared from Mount Pelion only in 1950, some six months after the main guerrilla army in the north had retreated across the Albanian frontier. It was therefore late in 1950 before the inhabitants of Cherasia were allowed – or compelled – to return to their village.

727 653 [657] [233] Government authorities were, however, well aware of the difficulties that confronted the community. The returned refugees were given every help to re-establish themselves. They received, gratis, 238 sheep to serve as a nucleus for their flock, as well as materials for the reconstruction of their houses, most of which had suffered damage. Officials issued seed and implements as well. A comprehensive work relief program was set up; for about two years after their return, the men of Cherasia received wages for working on projects that directly benefited their community. In this fashion the new road over the mountain was built – shortening the way to Volos by nearly half. [346] [312] Similarly, new and very handsome school and church buildings were constructed; and pipes from the spring in the upper village brought fresh water into lower Cherasia for the first time. This was vital if the population was to remain in the lower village the year around, since water had previously been unavailable there in summer. Another side of the government policy was to give no help toward reconstruction of the village of upper Cherasia – perched, as it was, high on the mountain beyond the reach of roads. No doubt the authorities in this fashion hoped to tie the villagers to the accessible lower village, and

/79 cont./

of the Saints and Christ that made them often take extremely dangerous steps against their conquerors. The leaders of the churches became victims of the cruelty, but at last these very same persecuted priests started the revolt and gave freedom to the Greek people. Thus religion is a part of our nationalism, it is a part of our freedom and a part of our struggle for existence. I do not think any Christian people have undergone the test for Christianity that the Greek people did. If one goes back deep into the causes of the present Greek stubbornness in resisting the impossible and standing by their promise up to the end to help England, we will find it again in their religion. 175 795 [619]

As long as people live in the religion they have developed throughout centuries they cannot be conquered.

Faith in time of trouble. For every trouble there is a remedy and there is some source that will come to aid. Long dry seasons often lead the people to /80/ all day and night prayers to Saint Ilias for rain. When members of the family get sick, the priest offers prayer. The people strongly believe in the mercifulness and forgiveness of God. All occurrences, good or bad, come from God and He rewards and punishes people according to their deeds. Possibly for people who are not contaminated with the explanation that science gives to many phenomena, it is better for them to have blind faith and hope for the solution of their troubles. 771 [776] [782] [755]

The church. The church occupies the central part of the village and has a large yard around it. Its steeple is wooden and temporarily keeps the bells that call the people to the morning and evening church services. The bells also serve for a fire alarm as well as school time for the children. When the people left their countries they left behind livestock, furniture, and many valuable things, but they succeeded in bringing with them the ikons and the church bells. Some of the ikons date back to the 16th century. The lower parts of the ikons are worn out from the kisses received in the church. The people have great pride in their church and in the power of their ikons to perform miracles. Regardless of 346 778 [361] [202] [789]

/80 cont./
their humble houses and subsistence level of living the people like to build beautiful churches with high steeples and decorate them /81/ with as many ikons and church bells they can. The people of Megali Vrisi not being satisfied with the structure of the present church have already quarried stone from the nearby hills for their future church structure. When the farmers were notified to offer personal work for the church they did it without complaint.

The people look up to the church as an institution which gives them hope and courage in times of disappointment and discouragement. Once a year a confession is made in the church in front of the ikons and the priest. People tell of their bad acts and forgive those that caused them trouble. All wedding ceremonies, baptisms and name day celebrations take place in the church.

Attendance. Women and children attend the church regularly. The men are rather irregular in their attendance. This is not due to their negligence nor to their failure to respect the church, but is due to the long church services that last for three hours. The people get tired of going to the church. Most attend the last part of the services. In spite of the variety of music and ceremonial activities, the church is losing /82/ attendance. Men like to know what they hear in the church, and since it is all abstract to them they prefer to stay out and send their wives and children.

With the increase of modern scientific beliefs by the farmers, the church will be forced to change its course and adopt itself to the new social changes.

The membership is obligatory. Every one born in the village becomes a member. It is not necessary to keep in books the names of the members since the whole population of the village naturally belongs to the church.

Contributions. Every family has to contribute for the support of the priest and for the upkeep of the church. This contribution is paid in kind. Besides this the church has voluntary donations by people whose prayers are answered, and by others for the

really Greek, since they do not conform to the tradition of Greekness.

Religion permeates Greek life, punctuating it with ritual. No Greek, urban or rural, would think of initiating anything important without a religious inauguration. Schools open with the inaugurative *agiasmos*, "making holy"; the foundation stone of every house is laid with *agiasmos*; merchants begin new undertakings with the proper religious inauguration. On Epiphany, the sea is made holy for those who journey on it. In the country, blessed water is carried from the Epiphany Mass to sprinkle on the fields. The Virgin and the Saints are invoked, but not mainly as correctives; their main function is to endow an undertaking with good and success, it is not primarily to prevent or correct. When a loved man, husband, son, brother, father, beloved, goes away with the merchant marine, or in the sponge-fishery, a woman makes a vow to the appropriate saint, to be fulfilled on the safe return. The islands are studded with small chapels which were promised on such occasions. However, priests are called in, and Saints and the Virgin invoked, also, when difficulties arise. Vows are made for the recovery of a loved one; the priest is called when the family has had a run of misfortune, to "make holy" and exorcise the evil. Priests conduct a rain litany to break a drought.

Traditionally, Sunday services are attended regularly by women and children, perhaps less faithfully by the men. Ceremonials, however, draw the entire family. The ritual is not bolstered by strict limits of time or rules of silence. Mass starts in due course, a little early or a little late, not on the dot of an appointed time. Children run in and out between the aisles, and mothers whisper endearments to babies. A woman will break into a dirge during the Good Friday Mass of the Epitaph, mourning the death of Christ, or adressing herself in sympathy to the bereaved Virgin. The Mass before the midnight preceding Easter is tense with expectation; there is great release and spontaneous joy when Christ is announced to be risen, and the "Christ is risen!" with which all are greeted is a true, joyous message, full of the wonder and the reassurance of the renewed miracle; the candles lighted from the sacred light at this time are carried home with true concern for saving the flame from extinction.

Religion is so firmly entrenched and unquestioned that it can be taken with casualness and a lack of self-conscious effort. It is accepted and ever-present like the air. One talks about Masses and preparations for litanies, but not about religion. Religion is not a personal matter, nor is it a guide to conduct. People consult the priest, but in matters of human relations, or, at any rate, relations which are regarded as secular, not because they are assailed by doubts. Young men do not talk about the meaning of Christ in their lives, nor do young girls dream of entering a convent. On the other hand, the Saints and the Virgin often figure in speech: a man singing of his beloved likens her neck to an altar, her arms to church tapers, or he tells her that he worships her like the Virgin.

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Greece Emi

To the Land of the Eagle

769 792 the family is always a priest and has charge of the church in which the relics rest, and, as I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of a Greek lady who knew the family well, I was able to arrange through her to visit the church on a certain morning and to have the sarcophagus opened for my benefit. She accompanied me herself, and brought with her two friends, a young man and a young woman, who had begged to be allowed to join the party on what was evidently a very unusual occasion.

PRIEST OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

346 The interior of the church[1] was cool and pleasant after the yellow glare of the Corfu streets. From the painted roof hung magnificent lamps of hammered silverwork, and on the shining parquet floor stood two massive candelabra—offerings, like the lamps, from those who had benefited, or believed they had benefited, by the intercession of the saint. As is customary in the Greek Church, there were no pews or chairs other than seats round the wall, and the building gained greatly in dignity by their absence. Pictures, deep-toned and mellow with age, decorated the walls.

771 While we were waiting for the sacristan to announce our arrival to the priest, a constant stream of worshippers entered the church—men, women, and children. With every appearance of devotion, they made a pilgrimage from one sacred object to the other, kissing each in turn, and finally entering

1 [containing relics of Spiridi-150 one, see cat 116, pp. N9-130-my Analysis]